The Road to the Top: How Educationally Resilient Black Students Defied the Odds and Earned Admission to a Selective University

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The Road to the Top:
How Educationally Resilient Black Students
Defied the Odds and Earned Admission to a Selective University

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

Justyn Korey Patterson Sr.

2012
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Road to the Top:
How Educationally Resilient Black Students
Defied the Odds and Earned Admission to a Selective University

by

Justyn Korey Patterson Sr.
Doctor of Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2012
Professor Robert Cooper, Co-Chair
Professor Tyrone C. Howard, Co-Chair

Black student underachievement has been studied extensively. On nearly every academic measure, Black students fare worse than their White and Asian peers. This mixed-methods study examined the impact of sociocultural and institutional pre-college experiences on Black students attending a highly selective university. The sample was comprised of 104 Black UCLA students who earned admission to the university as freshmen. Through this mixed-methods study I compared survey responses between the group of educationally resilient Black UCLA students and a California statewide data set of Black students (n=15049) on domains including family, peers, community, and school using the California Healthy Kids Resilience Module as the survey instrument. The qualitative component of my study included focus groups with 15 Black UCLA
students and two individual interviews with an additional 15 Black UCLA students. My findings show that educationally resilient students had significantly more positive schooling experiences than their Black peers statewide. They felt significantly more connected to their schools, had more caring relationships, and were held to higher academic standards than their peers. These findings were underscored by interviews with students that highlighted the culture of support that existed for them in their schools. Contrary to studies that assert that Black families, peer groups, and communities are a hindrance to academic achievement, this study shows that these students had families, peer groups, and community institutions that supported and encouraged academic achievement. These data suggest that the sociocultural and institutional domains can be used to promote educational resilience for Black students.
The dissertation of Justyn Patterson is approved.

Darnell Montez Hunt
Ernest D. Morrell
Robert Cooper, Committee Co-Chair
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University of California, Los Angeles
2012
DEDICATION PAGE

This manuscript is dedicated first and foremost to my wife, Tamara Patterson, who has been my rock throughout this arduous process. I could not have completed this without you. I appreciate you more than I could attempt to tell you in these few words.

To my sons, Justyn Jr., Jaedyn, and Juliayn, thank you for allowing me to take on this project. I know you have had to sacrifice weekends and evenings with dad to let me complete my research. Just know that I did this for you. The bar has been set for you. I expect all three of you to do much more than I have done.

To my brothers and sisters, I love you all immensely. Whether you know it or not, our experiences are what motivated me to take on this particular research topic. I don’t know what I would be without all of you.

Finally to my parents, Virgil and Jeraldine Patterson, you have been preparing me to reach this point since I was a child. You set an example for me about so many things. You taught me to be a child of God, a man, a husband, a father, and a scholar. You encouraged me, supported me, and believed in me unconditionally. I hope I have made you proud.
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PRESENTATIONS

Chapter One

The Problem

Educational disparities between White students and underrepresented minority students still characterize the United States educational system despite the expenditure of billions of dollars and the passage of legislation to “level the playing field.” The federal government commits over $1 billion dollars to outreach programs, and the state of California alone commits tens of millions of dollars to outreach efforts designed to provide access to educationally disadvantaged minorities and low-income students (Swail & Perna, 2002; Torres, 2004). Regardless of the academic indicators used to compare Black students to their White peers, Black students fare worse in the comparison. Between 1972 and 2008, college-going rates rose among both Blacks and Whites, yet the racial gap in college enrollment more than tripled from a 5% gap to a 16% gap between the two ethnic groups (Aud, et al., 2010; Posselt, Jaquette, Bielby, & Bastedo, 2012). Among students who do attend college after high school graduation, six-year graduation rates for Black students remain 20% lower than graduation rates for White students and 17% below the national average (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2010).

Data from the secondary school level present a very similar picture. In 2008, the national Black high school student dropout rate was 9.9%, a number that is double the dropout rate for White students (Aud, et al., 2010). In the years between 1990-2008, the Black-White difference in dropout rate has remained unchanged (Aud, et al., 2010). In 2009, the reading scale scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that approximately 41% of White 8th grade students and 14% of Black 8th grade students performed at or above proficient

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1 Throughout this dissertation, the term “Black” will be used to refer to individuals of African descent living in America. As the author, I do not have a specific preference for the term “Black” over the term “African-American” so I have just chosen one term to be used throughout the study.
(Aud, et al., 2010). The achievement gap in math on the NAEP revealed that 44% of White 8th graders and 12% of Black 8th graders scored at or above proficient (Aud, et al., 2010). Course-taking patterns between Black students and White students also illuminate the educational gap. Approximately 15% of Black students earn Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) credits during high school, while nearly 33% of White students earn credits from taking these academically challenging courses (Planty, Bozick, & Ingels, 2006). In 2009 just 6% of Black students completed a rigorous curriculum level, lower than Hispanic students (8%), White students (14%), and Asian students (29%) (Nord, et al., 2011).

Black students in California do not perform better than Black students nationally. An important indicator of college preparedness in California is the rate that students complete the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) “a-g” course requirements to gain eligibility for the two public systems of higher education in the state. Black students are disproportionately underrepresented within the UC and CSU systems. In 2007, only 6.3% of Black students attending public high school were eligible for UC admission while nearly 15% of White students met UC eligibility requirements (A. Griffin, 2008). Even among the less competitive California State University system the Black students eligibility rate of 24% trails the White eligibility rate of 37% (A. Griffin, 2008). As a result of their lower eligibility rates for these universities, Black students who do attend college disproportionately attend broad-access institutions that do not have rigorous admissions requirements (Kirst & Bracco, 2004; Posselt, et

\[2\] AP and IB courses are considered college-level high school courses that give students extra grade points that raise their overall academic grade point averages.

\[3\] Includes four English credits, three social studies credits, math through pre-calculus, biology, chemistry, physics, and three credits of a foreign language.

\[4\] To satisfy the University of California subject requirement, a student must complete 15 yearlong high school courses with a grade of C or better — and at least seven of them must be taken in your last two years of high school.
Students who attend these institutions are more likely to enroll in remedial classes and are less likely to earn a degree (Kirst & Bracco, 2004; Masse, Perez, & Posselt, 2010).

Institutional barriers can explain part of the Black-White achievement gap. For purposes of this study the term “institutional” refers specifically to educational organizations and their agents ie. teachers, counselors, and school administrators. An examination of the high schools that Black students typically attend shows that Black students generally have less access to well-trained teachers, less access to qualified counselors who promote achievement for all students, and are more likely to fall victim to practices like academic “tracking” that limit Black students’ access to college preparatory coursework (Gandara & Bial, 2001; McDonough, 1997; Oakes, 1985).

Institutional factors alone cannot explain the relative underachievement of Black students. Sociocultural influences also impact Black student achievement, just as they do with all other ethnic groups. For this study, “sociocultural” refers to the power that parents, peers, and a student’s community play in their individual educational decisions. A student’s development and academic success is at least partially dependent upon their interaction with sociocultural forces including their families, peers, and their communities (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Kozulin, 2002). A central tenet of sociocultural theory is that individuals use “connected, schematized, shared knowledge of [their] everyday cultural world to adapt and make complex decisions to survive in their local community” (Weisner, 2002). Children learn by observing and participating in activities, including educational activities, with their parents and siblings, their friends, and teachers that they interact with on a daily basis (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Cooper, Chavira, & Mena, 2005; Gallimore, Goldenberg, & Weisner, 1993; Rogoff, 1994).
Several theorists suggest that the academic achievement gap between Black students and their White peers is a result of the negative attitudes and beliefs about schooling held by the Black community as a result of generations of oppression and unequal treatment (Fordham, 2008; Fordham & Ogbo, 1986; Mickelson, 1990; Steele, 1992; Whaley & Noel, 2011). Ogbu (2004) asserts that the development of an oppositional cultural frame of reference in response to institutional and environmental racism as well as negative perceptions of the school environment held by the Black community have created the academic achievement gap that we observe (Irving & Hudley, 2005; Yeung & Conley, 2008). Family members, peers, and role models often demonstrate a lack of trust in, and connection to, dominant (White) culture and its’ institutions (including schools), and these negative attitudes influence the way that individual students engage with such institutions. Steele (1992, 1997) also argues that Black students are more likely to disidentify with school because poor performance can ultimately threaten one’s own perception of self and validate negative stereotypes held by dominant culture. Rather than invest in academics and risk failure, Black students may choose to disengage from school to protect their self-esteem. Stewart, Stewart, & Simons (2007) found that neighborhood disadvantage, as measured by proportion of female-headed households, proportion of residents receiving public assistance, proportion of households below the poverty level, proportion of persons unemployed, and proportion of persons who were Black, exerts a significant influence on the college aspirations of Black students. Clearly sociocultural factors including family members, peer networks, and communities impact the educational success or failure of Black students. At first glance it may seem that these theories place the onus of Black student underachievement on the Black community itself. However, it is important to note that these theories in fact focus on how historical and contemporary societal inequities have created the conditions whereby a
disproportionate number of Black students do not excel academically. Historical educational
disenfranchisement, disparate allocation of funds to urban schools populated by People of Color,
exclusion from the decision-making processes in schools, and the disparity between what we
know to be right and what we as a society actually do, have combined to create an “education
debt” that must be acknowledged and dealt with before the achievement gap will begin to recede
(Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Given our understanding that sociocultural influences play a role in Black educational
attainment, it is apparent that simply addressing issues around unequal educational resources will
not rectify the academic achievement gap. It is true that students who attend schools in more
affluent areas do have access to better instruction, counseling, and other critical resources, yet
even when controlling for income the achievement gap still exists (Gandara & Bial, 2001; S. L.
Myers, 2000). Black students who attend schools in more affluent areas do outperform their
low-income Black peers, but these students still do not perform on par with their privileged
White peers. In fact, low-income White students (annual income less than $10,000) score over
100 points higher on the SAT than the national average for Black students and 61 points higher
than middle-high income Black students (Lavin-Loucks, 2006). The academic achievement gap
among middle-class Black students and their middle-class White peers is actually greater than
the gap found among low-income students (S. L. Myers, 2000). Similarly, the California
Postsecondary Education Commission has shown that White students outperform their Black
peers across all income strata⁵.

**Overview of Previous Research & Purpose of the Study**

⁵ [http://www.cpec.ca.gov/FactSheets/FactSheet2006/fs06-04.pdf](http://www.cpec.ca.gov/FactSheets/FactSheet2006/fs06-04.pdf)
The academic underachievement of Black students as a result of institutional barriers is well documented (Burris, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Ferguson, 2003; Oakes, 1985; Skiba, 2002; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). Similarly, the causes of the achievement gap related to sociocultural influences have also been thoroughly researched (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Mickelson, 1990; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 2004; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991; Steele, 1992, 1997). Resilience research has generally emphasized the characteristics that resilient students possess, including good intellectual functioning, high self-esteem and self-control, an internal locus of control, and optimism (Benard, 1993; Condly, 2006; Gordon, 1995, Griffin & Allen, 2006; Hebert & Reis, 1999; Luthar, 1991; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1989) and protective mechanisms that work to shield at-risk children from threat (Benard, 1993; Cowen, Wyman, Work & Iker, 1995; Floyd, 1996; Garmezy, 1991; Hebert & Reis; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1989).

While we understand that institutional and structural racism have created the achievement gap, and that there are protective factors that may lead to the resilience of Black students, few researchers have looked at the interplay between the two among the highest achieving Black students. There is little research that documents the high school experiences of college students attending highly selective universities. Griffin & Allen (2006) conducted a related study of high achieving Black high school students attending either a well-resourced suburban school or a low-resourced urban school. For their study, “high-achieving” was defined as having a grade point average of at least 3.0 and enrolled in either Advanced Placement (AP) courses or the Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program. Findings suggest that regardless of the school’s location and available resources, Black students still face barriers that impede college preparation. Their participants, however, demonstrated resiliency and remained focused
on their goal of attending college. A similar study conducted by Hebert & Reis (1999) studied 18 high-achieving students attending a culturally diverse urban high school in the Northeast. For this study, “high-achieving” was defined by enrollment in an academically gifted program, earning high grades, receiving a teacher/counselor recommendation, or having earned academic awards and honors. Findings suggest that high-achieving students have a strong belief in self, have supportive family members and other supportive adults, and create networks of high-achieving peers to support their academic efforts.

My study builds on the existing research on resilience and the academic achievement gap by examining Black students who have demonstrated an extremely high level of resiliency by gaining admission to one of the nation’s most selective public universities. Previous research does not define academic resilience as stringently as my study does. Literature exists on resilient students who have overcome significant hardship to attain some level of success, but there is little research documenting the experiences of Black students who reach an apex of academic achievement. The insight gained from this group is critical for researchers and educational practitioners who promote equity and access to higher education, particularly at highly selective institutions. A greater understanding of the challenges that these students faced and what factors helped them to overcome their challenges will help schools, universities, and non-profit organizations to create relevant and targeted interventions that can ultimately lead to increased numbers of competitive Black students.

**Research Questions**

In spite of the challenges to attaining higher education for many Black students, some succeed academically and matriculate to competitive four-year universities. The purpose of my study is to understand the institutional and sociocultural influences that educationally resilient
Black college students encountered during high school on their paths to competitive university admission and enrollment. My mixed-methods study addressed the following questions:

1. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the institutional influences that they encountered in their pursuits of higher education?

2. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the sociocultural influences that they encountered in their pursuits of higher education?

3. Are there factors beyond the sociocultural or institutional influences that facilitated educational resilience in Black students?

4. To what extent do sociocultural and institutional influences predict educational resilience?

5. Do the sociocultural and institutional influences differ between Black UCLA students and California Black high school graduates-at-large?

**Institutional Explanations for the Achievement Gap**

Institutional explanations of the achievement gap have generally focused on curriculum, teaching strategies, teacher expectations, and counseling (Davis, 2003). For all students, college preparatory courses have a positive effect on student achievement, especially courses in math and science (Oakes, 2003). For Black students, the intensity and quality of their courses is the most powerful factor increasing a student’s chances to complete a college degree (Oakes, 2003). Black students, however, do not have equal access to a rigorous college preparatory curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2004; McDonough, 2005). They are often “tracked” into less challenging courses, limiting their access to Advanced Placement and honors classes, and ultimately limiting their access to college admission (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Another consequence of “tracking” practices is that Black students’ access to faculty and staff who encourage academic engagement and achievement is limited because teachers who teach the lower-level courses are less likely to
hold high expectations and encourage academic achievement (McDonough, 2004; Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

Black students’ teachers have lower academic expectations for them than they do of their White students (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Black students may disengage from school because they are aware of their marginalized status within the system. Academic performance of Blacks, more than other ethnic groups, is largely dependent upon the support they receive from their teachers (Noguera, 2003; Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). Thus, the group that is in most need for teacher support is less likely to receive it.

Black students face challenges that could be mitigated, to some degree, by access to a comprehensive college-going culture in their schools. Unfortunately, such access is not the reality for many Black students. College counseling is a key component to increasing access to higher education and raising students’ academic expectations (McDonough, 2005; Oakes, 2003). Black students are less likely than their White peers to receive adequate counseling (McDonough, 2005; Roderick, 2003). The lack of counseling has long been identified as a hindrance for minority students in their pursuit of higher education (McDonough, 1997; Oakes, 1985). Unlike White students, Black students tend to see their counselors as impediments rather than as allies due to negative schooling experiences (Gandara, 2002). Black students are more likely to be tracked into lower-level courses because they do not receive sound counseling. Tracking ultimately limits their access to a college preparatory curriculum and results in more poor performance on standardized tests and lower rates of college enrollment (Gandara, 2002).

Sociocultural Explanations for the Achievement Gap

One plausible explanation for why many Black students do not perform to their academic potential is the Black communities’ history with an education system that has not recognized
their academic ability and the resulting doubt in their own academic competence (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Steele, 1992). This phenomenon, coupled with limited access to jobs and fair wages, has created an environment that does not always encourage academic engagement (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Stinson, 2006). As a result of their exclusion from the economic, social, and educational arenas, many Black people may have created a collective identity in opposition to the social identity of Whites (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Devices that preserve separation between themselves and White Americans characterize some black people’s cultural frame of reference. Events, symbols, and activities (including academic performance) that are deemed to be the domain of Whites are negatively sanctioned and replaced by behaviors that are not viewed as the domain of Whites (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

The idea of collective identity is communicated to students in various ways. Peer groups represent an important mechanism by which the collective identity and the cultural frame of reference are disseminated in the Black community. Some theorists posit that peer groups often discourage their members from achieving academic success (Cohen, 1983; Fordham, 2008). Black students who attempt to cross the cultural divide are ridiculed verbally, excluded from activities, and even face physical attack (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). To “act White” and engage in academics means that a student must be willing to fight to maintain their status in the Black community while simultaneously seeking entrance in White society (Fordham, 2008).

Family and community members may also communicate messages that lead to academic disengagement for Black students (Auerbach, 2007). Messages that are meant to motivate may actually have an opposite effect. Parents who have encountered institutional barriers in both the academic and professional arenas communicate to their children that they have to “do twice as good to get half as far” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). While well intentioned, these messages may
cause Black students to reject a system that they view is unfair rather than try to fight for success within the system.

Minority youth who may already have relatively weak beliefs that they “belong” in their schools, that their teachers and peers respect and value them, and that their friends value school, are less likely to endure the cultural backlash for their academic engagement to gain access to a system that may not want them (Fordham, 2008; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Steele, 1992; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The risk of fulfilling White cultural norms and possibly being alienated from their own community without the guarantee of economic or social rewards can be a difficult decision to make (Fordham, 2008). When facing a society and institutions that often seek to exclude and oppress minorities, ethnic group membership and acceptance becomes vitally important (Cunningham, Corprew, & Becker, 2009; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Black students’ belief that school achievement is not relevant to their life outcomes due to society’s inequities also has a negative effect on their engagement and achievement (Irving & Hudley, 2005; Strayhorn, 2009). Though research shows that Black students in fact hold stronger abstract beliefs that education is a mechanism for upward mobility, it has been proven that these beliefs do not translate into positive academic outcomes (Mickelson, 1990). Students’ concrete beliefs, formed based upon life experiences and observations, are strong predictors of academic achievement. For Black students, these low concrete beliefs lead to academic underperformance and distrust of the educational system.

**Conceptual Framework**

Two theories, namely critical race theory and resilience theory, frame my study. Critical race theory (CRT) is central to the study because it exposes the everyday racism that many
Americans take for granted as a fact of life or way of being (E. Taylor, 2009). Through the CRT lens, the racial inequality that we observe in all facets of life including healthcare, employment, housing, and education are all linked to racism and White hegemony (E. Taylor, 2009). Therefore, observations that Black students hold low *concrete attitudes* about schooling and education, that Black students do not enroll in rigorous college preparatory courses, or that Black parents are relatively less engaged in the educational process must be understood from a historical, racial context. The power of critical race theory is not in *blaming* White America for the injustices that marginalized groups face, but instead the power is in *understanding* where we are and how we got here in our racialized society. The awakening to realities that exist in contemporary America holds the power to reinvigorate the masses of minority groups that have come to accept their position in life and push them to resist racism and oppression. And, faced with a truth previously not considered, educators may develop new strategies and practices that are “so authentic and powerful as to eradicate all forms of oppression” (E. Taylor, 2009, p. 12).

Although institutional and structural racism remain prevalent in America today, and this racism has led to Black student underachievement, some Black students do successfully maneuver around and through these challenges and manage to earn admission to competitive four-year universities. I use resilience theory to understand the barriers and support these students encountered, and how they achieved academic success.

Resilience can be defined as the ability to thrive in the face of obstacles or adverse circumstances. As related to this study, *educational resilience* is defined as high educational achievement despite the presence of risk factors. Three factors that define resilience and how individuals overcome obstacles include the individuals’ native intelligence and temperament, the individuals’ family and degree of support it provides, and external support from people and
institutions outside of the family (Garmezy, 1991). In order to develop resiliency, children need opportunities to escape from hostile environments, explore in safety and security, and to believe and to dream (Katz, 1997). Although educators may not have the capacity to effect native intelligence and temperament, a better understanding of how support from family, peers, community, and institutions impacts academic resilience may yield great benefits to educators interested in the achievement of minority students.

Resistance theory complements resilience theory in that it offers an additional explanation to educational achievement despite adverse circumstances. As members of a hegemonic society the pressure to assimilate or accommodate the established cultural norms is constant (Giroux, 1981; E. Gordon, 2005). Many students eschew this expectation and maintain their own cultural identities while simultaneously achieving academically (Akom, 2008; Brayboy, 2005; O’Connor, 1997; Sanders, 1997).

Methodology

This study used a concurrent transformative mixed methods approach utilizing quantitative survey data as well as qualitative focus groups and personal interviews. In the quantitative section, I modified the “Resilience Module” from the California Healthy Kids Survey created by WestED⁶. I surveyed 104 Black UCLA students who responded to questions designed to elicit responses along the sociocultural and school domains.⁷ Their responses allowed me to (a) compare educationally resilient Black UCLA students with a statewide dataset

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⁶ The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) is the largest statewide survey of resiliency, protective factors, and risk behaviors in the nation. Their website is: http://chks.wested.org/. See Appendix A for complete survey.

⁷ See Appendix B for the complete survey.
consisting of more than 16,000 survey respondents and (b) discover whether or not and to what extent sociocultural and institutional factors can predict resilience.

While I collected my survey data, I simultaneously conducted focus groups and interviews with Black UCLA students\(^8\). Through these interviews I created an authentic story that probed the participants’ past educational experiences. The goal of my study was to understand how educationally resilient students navigate sociocultural and institutional domains to gain admission to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) – one of the country’s most selective public institutions. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore and understand the meaning groups ascribe to problems (Creswell, 2009). For my particular study, the depths of answers gained by qualitative methods complemented the information gained by my surveys. The information that is gained by quantitative research is important in its ability to examine relationships between variables (Creswell, 2009). While those relationships provide critical information to researchers and practitioners, they do not illuminate the experiences, perceptions, and understandings of subjects that qualitative studies do. For instance, a survey can identify correlations between the college aspirations of a student’s peers and their own college enrollment patterns, but they cannot explain how or why a friends’ college choice impacts an individual. The mixed methods design was ideal because I was able to answer questions about relationships between variables while also probing more deeply into the experiences of my research participants. From among my 104 survey respondents, I identified 15 students to participate in one of two focus groups, and 15 different students to participate in two interviews that lasted between 30-40 minutes each. I sought to have a balance of gender, socioeconomic status, parent education level, and parent marital status.

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\(^8\) See Appendices C and D for focus group and interview protocols.
Critical race methodology is a key component to my research that helps to frame my thinking about resilience and Black students. Black student underachievement is frequently told from a “majoritarian” perspective that is often internalized by communities of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002b). This perspective tends to validate, rather than question and critique, negative perceptions of non-White cultures. Critical race methodology is built on the “counter-story,” a narrative that relies on the lived experiences of members of disenfranchised groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002b). The counter-story questions society’s perceived wisdom and challenges established belief systems (Delgado, 1989; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002a). Communities of color benefit from the psychological healing that results from countering their own internalized negative perceptions of themselves (Delgado, 1989). My research relied heavily upon the stories and experiences that the participants shared to challenge the negative perceptions of Black students and education.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it illuminates how educationally resilient Black students interacted with their environments and gained access to a highly selective university. The underrepresentation of Black students in selective universities has been an issue for decades and legislation that eliminated affirmative action in states like California has only served to exacerbate the problem. Government agencies, universities, high schools, churches, and community-based organizations spend billions of dollars annually to increase the pool of students who attend college. We can learn a great deal from educationally resilient students who have overcome significant challenge to reach the pinnacle of academic success by earning admission to UCLA. These students can name and speak specifically to the barriers and supports that they encountered on their road to academic success. For entities interested in increasing the
pool of competitive students to highly selective postsecondary institutions the information learned from these students can prove to be important components to their program designs and offerings.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

The literature documenting the academic underachievement of Black students relative to their White peers is extensive (Aud, et al., 2010; Fordham, 2008; Mickelson, 1990; Nord, et al., 2011; Ogbu, 2004; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Steele, 1997). Black students are less likely to graduate from high school; less likely to attend four-year college immediately after high school; perform more poorly on standardized tests; and earn lower grade point averages than their White counterparts (Aud, et al., 2010; Lavin-Loucks, 2006; Nord, et al., 2011). Some theorists attribute the achievement gap to disproportionate limited access to social capital for low socioeconomic status and minority students, (Auerbach, 2007; Bourdieu, 1986; D. J. Carter, 2008; McDonough, 2005; Noguera, 2003), where social capital is defined as the quantity and quality of resources that a person can access or use based upon their location in the social hierarchy (Lin, 2000). Addressing this issue is critical because unequal educational attainment has severe implications for the Black community. Disparate educational achievement limits employment opportunities for Blacks, and by extension increases the poverty rates, homicide rates, and incarceration rates for the community (Lee & Madyun, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Oyserman, et al., 1995).

My literature review begins by investigating the causes of the academic achievement gap. Specifically, to frame the discussion around the sociocultural and institutional barriers to
academic achievement for Black students, I employ Ogbu’s Cultural Ecology Theory (1981; 1998), Mickelson’s Attitude-Achievement Paradox (1990), Fordham and Ogbu’s Burden of “acting White” (1986), and Steele and Aronson’s Stereotype Threat (1995). At their core, these theories all point to the institutional and structural racism that Black Americans have endured throughout their history in this country.

The validity of these theories has been questioned by other researchers (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Cousins, 2008; Downey, Ainsworth, & Qian, 2009; Gould, 1999; Spencer, Cross, Harpalani, & Goss, 2003; Spencer & Harpalani, 2008); thus, the second part of my literature review explores these contrasting viewpoints. The third part of the chapter will present support for my framework and delineate why I believe these theories are important components for understanding the achievement gap. Finally, the last section of the literature review will focus on resilience theory and how resilience is cultivated in students. In contrast to the vast majority of research on the subject of low achieving Black students, it is essential to take a strengths perspective to understand how educationally resilient Black students attained academic success, empowered themselves, and took control of their life trajectories despite challenging conditions.

Guiding Theories

Cultural ecology model.

Ogbu’s explanation for the academic underachievement of Black students examines the systemic societal and school factors, as well as the forces within the Black community, which contribute to the academic underperformance and disengagement of Black students (Ogbu, 1981; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Central to this theory is the understanding that Black student school performance is not due to any inherent deficiency among Blacks, but rather is a response to the
mistreatment and inequities that they experience within the school system and society at large (Auerbach, 2007; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Roderick, 2003). Black students are more likely to attend schools with fewer educational resources including fewer higher level academic classes such as Advanced Placement courses (Teranishi, Allen, & Solorzano, 2004). Black students are also more likely to attend schools that are populated by mostly minority students and are characterized by less access to high quality curriculum, less experienced teachers, inadequate college and academic counseling, and low student expectations (P. Carter, 2003; Ferguson, 1991, 2003; McDonough, 2005; Teranishi, et al., 2004; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009; Wiggan, 2007). A report by the UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access found that in California, Black students are twice as likely to attend overcrowded schools than their White peers, are more likely than any other ethnic group to attend schools where their college preparatory classes are taught by teachers without the proper credentials, and are four times more likely than their White or Asian peers to attend high poverty schools (Ali, et al., 2007). Black students are more likely to be labeled as “at-risk” or as having behavior problems, and they are disciplined more frequently and more severely than their White peers (Noguera, 1996, 2003; Roderick, 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). When they attend schools that do offer advanced courses and other college preparatory resources, Black students are less likely to have access to them because they are funneled into less competitive tracks, thereby maintaining the status quo (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Oakes, 1985; Oakes & Guiton, 1995).

School institutional racism is one key cause of the underachievement of Black students, but societal forces also play a significant role in shaping the educational aspirations and attainment of Black students. Black students are more likely than White students to reside in
poverty-stricken urban communities where high crime rates, joblessness, single-parent households, and declining community institutions are the norm (Lee & Madyun, 2009; Stewart, Stewart, & Simons, 2007; Williams, Davis, Cribbs, Saunders, & Williams, 2002). They observe unequal access to employment and earnings commensurate to education level. Such inequity may have a negative impact on their achievement because it is difficult for some students to understand how the delayed gratification of school success leads to future rewards or to find models of people like themselves who are successful (Irving & Hudley, 2005; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Steele, 1997).

As a result of the institutional inequities that Blacks experience in school and in society’s institutions, many develop a collective identity and an oppositional cultural frame of reference (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1981, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986), collective identity is a “sense of peoplehood in opposition to the social identity of white Americans because of the way white Americans treat [Black people] in economic, political, social, and psychological domains” (p. 181). Many Black people believe that regardless of their education or capability, they will never be able to assimilate into mainstream America; therefore, they create an oppositional cultural frame of reference to preserve their identity and establish boundaries between themselves and White America (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Since academic achievement is perceived as a White domain, Black students may choose to disengage from the educational system in efforts to maintain an independent identity from the dominant culture.

The formulation of Black students’ collective identity is a result of the messages that they receive from, and experiences they observe in, family members, peers, and the community (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Kaplan, 2000; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991; Wiggan, 2007).
 Minority parents are more likely to have adversarial, distrustful relationships with the school system because of their own negative experiences and because of perceived discrimination by the school structure (Auerbach, 2007). In neighborhoods characterized by a negative social climate\(^9\), parents are more likely to emphasize racism and racial mistrust with their children than parents who live in neighborhoods primarily populated by White families (Caughey, Nettles, O'Campo, & Lohrfink, 2006). These racial socialization practices encourage the formulation of an oppositional cultural frame of reference, pitting Blacks against Whites and the institutions, like school, that are seen as a White domain.

Similarly, peer groups play an instrumental role in how students understand their social context (Clark, 1991; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Phelan, et al., 1991). During adolescence, the peer group gains particular importance as teens seek social acceptance (Cunningham, et al., 2009). When a student’s peer group has established values and norms, a *collective identity*, which does not value educational achievement, the student is less likely to place value in that domain either (Fordham, 2008; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Nebbitt, Lombe, LaPoint, & Bryant, 2009; Noguera, 2003). As a result, a tension can arise with students who try to “be” Black in a manner that is consistent with their peer groups perception of “Blackness” (Nasir, et al., 2009). In order to fit in with their peer group’s conceptualization of Blackness, students may be required to eschew academic achievement.

**Burden of “Acting White.”**

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) built upon Ogbu’s cultural ecology model for explaining the academic achievement gap by introducing the theory that the burden of “acting White” is a key

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\(^9\) Neighborhood negative climate is a measure that includes perceived physical/social disorder (presence of trash, graffiti, drug dealers, and gangs), fear of retaliation (likelihood that an altercation would occur if a teen's behavior was corrected by someone else), and fear of victimization (how worried one is about being a victim of property and/or personal crime)
contributing factor to the underperformance of Black students (Fordham, 2008; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Kaplan, 2000). Black students are aware that the opportunity structure in America, including fair wages, job opportunities, and access to adequate education, is unequal (Fordham, 2008). Minorities’ subordinate status has taught them that “certain forms of behavior and certain activities or events, symbols, and meanings [are] not appropriate for them because those behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings are characteristic of white Americans” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 181). Behaviors that include academic engagement and achievement fall outside of the realm of “appropriate” behavior for Blacks. Therefore Black students who try to cross culturally defined lines are labeled as “acting White” and face opposition from their peers and their community (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Ogbu, 2004; Roderick, 2003).

In an ethnographic study conducted at Capital High School, a predominantly Black high school in Washington D.C., researchers found that Black students felt compelled to constantly exhibit loyalty to one another and their Black identity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). One way that loyalty was displayed was by deeming as unacceptable behaviors that they considered “White.” These behaviors included speaking standard English, listening to White music, spending time in the library, and working hard to get good grades. The majority of the students at Capital High chose to avoid these activities that would be perceived as acting White rather than face their peers’ displeasure. The few successful students had to resolve the tension between striving to achieve academically – “acting White” - and the disapproval of their peers. Performing “Whiteness” is often understood as a violation of Black citizenship, and in an academic setting, can be perceived as an attempt to dominate your peers (Fordham, 2008). The dilemma for Black students is to determine how to be what they may consider socially White, meaning adopting the
cultural, linguistic, and economic practices of White America, without alienating themselves from their own community (Fordham, 2008; Noguera, 2003). In order to maintain their Black identities while achieving academically, some students “cloak” their academic strivings beneath a persona that seems disinterested in academics (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Other students mask their academic identities by irregular class attendance or forming friendships with students who have embraced an oppositional cultural frame of reference, like gang members and bullies, who have good reputations among the other Black students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). They may also disguise their academic selves by becoming the “class clown,” focusing on athletics, or gaining popularity through other peer-sanctioned extra-curricular activities. Forced to conceal their academic pursuits behind a personae that is acceptable by their peers, these academically-inclined students often experience affective dissonance, or a feeling that they are betraying their communities and their true selves, as they pursue something that has been deemed “White” (Ogbu, 1981).

**Attitude-Achievement paradox.**

If Ogbu (1981) and Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) assertions are true that Black students underachieve due to the formation of an oppositional cultural frame of reference and a collective identity that shuns “acting White,” then we would expect to see anti-school attitudes among Black students. Such attitudes, however, are apparently not the case. Researchers have shown that Black students generally hold education in high regard, often demonstrating a higher value for education than other ethnic groups, including Whites (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Downey, et al., 2009; Mickelson, 1990; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu & Simons, 1994; Strayhorn, 2009).

At first glance this information seems to contradict the data stating that Black students disengage from educational institutions due to oppositional identity, mistreatment, or belief that
society will not offer them a fair chance to succeed (Ainsworth, 2002; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Fordham, 2008; Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Grodsky & Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Irving & Hudley, 2005; Oyserman, et al., 1995; Stewart, 2008; Swanson, et al., 2003; Williams, et al., 2002). However, Mickelson (1990) claims that all students have two types of attitudes toward school. Abstract attitudes are based on the belief that education is a vehicle for success and upward mobility. On the other hand, concrete attitudes are a reflection of the realities people experience within the United States opportunity structure (Mickelson, 1990). In a society where minorities often do not receive the same wages, jobs, or promotions as White people, concrete and abstract attitudes show strong variation.

Most studies of attitudes measure students’ abstract beliefs and not their concrete attitudes. In Mickelson’s (1990) study of students from eight Los Angeles high schools, she was able to demonstrate that (a) all students hold both concrete and abstract attitudes toward schooling; (b) Black students have a statistically more significant belief in the dominant ideology (abstract attitude) about schooling; (c) Black students concrete attitudes are more pessimistic about education than Whites; and (d) abstract beliefs do not predict academic performance, but concrete beliefs have a significant positive effect on performance in high school. The distinction between both attitudes towards education demonstrates how researchers can measure positive attitudes towards schooling among Blacks, yet still observe underachievement relative to other groups. According to this research, many Black students do not completely embrace the dominant discourse that casts education as a means for upward mobility because of the realities that they see in their homes, schools, and communities every day (Mickelson, 1990).

School identification & stereotype threat.
Steele (1992) offers a comparable explanation to those advanced by Ogbu, Fordham, and Mickelson for the underachievement of Blacks, yet with a critical distinction. Steele does not discount the societal disadvantage borne of slavery, segregation, job ceilings, lack of economic opportunity, and poor schools that impact Black student achievement. Steele, similar to Fordham and Ogbu, also concedes that Black culture may not foster learning orientations toward school achievement because of its mainstream, dominant culture orientation. However, Steele asserts that these explanations are insufficient because middle-class Black students who are not economically disadvantaged and who attend wealthy college campuses still underperform relative to their White peers (Steele, 1992). Similar to Black high school students, these college students also exhibit high pro-school attitudes when compared to other racial groups. Yet, he also found that at a large, prestigious university, only two to 11 percent of Whites flunked out compared to 18 to 33 percent of Blacks even at the highest levels of college preparation (Steele, 1992). Since Steele observed that even the most academically prepared Black students falter more often than their White peers, he concludes that a lack of academic preparation cannot fully account for Black underachievement or disengagement either.

The Black achievement problem is rooted in the failure of American schools to foster in Black students a belief that school achievement can be a basis for self-esteem (P. Carter, 2003; Honora, 2003; Nasir, et al., 2009; Steele, 1992). For all students, the school system represents a place where they are in jeopardy of being devalued for specific incompetence like mispronunciation of a word or failing a test. However for Black students, there is also a risk that their performance will also validate the racial inferiority that many ascribe to Blacks (Steele, 1992, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). It is the persistence of this stereotype threat that causes many Black students to disengage from school as a psychological protective mechanism (Steele,
When a student “disidentifies” with school, academic achievement is no longer a basis by which the student defines themselves and is no longer important to their self-esteem (Steele, 1992, 1999). Some of the power of this coping mechanism is held in the strategy becoming a group norm. Once it becomes a norm, an inordinate amount of pressure to devalue schooling is placed on Black students who may otherwise value academic achievement (Fordham, 2008; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004; Steele, 1992).

The threat of confirming a negative stereotype has negative effects on the academic achievement of Black students (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In one study, Black and White college students were administered a 30-minute verbal section of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). In the stereotype threat condition, students were told that the test measured intellectual ability, thus making the threat of confirming a negative stereotype real for Black test-takers. In the non-stereotype threat condition, the exam was described as a problem-solving task with no diagnostic validity. With differences in SAT scores statistically controlled, Black participants performed worse than Whites when the test was described as diagnostic of intellectual ability. Test scores for Blacks and Whites were statistically equal when the test was not presented as reflective of ability, thereby showing that when the possibility of confirming a negative group stereotype is eliminated, differences in performance are negated. In a separate study, Steele (1995) demonstrated that when Black and White students were given tests described as either diagnostic or non-diagnostic of academic ability, Black participants in the ability-diagnostic group showed a greater awareness of stereotypes about Blacks, greater concerns about their ability, a greater tendency to avoid racially stereotypic preferences, a greater tendency to make excuses for their test performance, and a greater reluctance to link their racial identity to their examinations. These data support the hypothesis that when Blacks feel vulnerable to negative
stereotypes about their intellectual ability, their performance suffers. Over time, while dealing with low teacher expectations, non-supportive counselors, and peers that have adopted an adversarial stance toward educational engagement, many students choose to disidentify with school rather than struggle against such pressure (Ferguson, 2003; Fordham, 2008; Nasir, et al., 2009; Oakes, 1985; Steele, 1997).

**Contrasting Viewpoints**

The aforementioned theories, particularly Fordam and Ogbu’s “Burden of acting White” (1986), Ogbu’s Cultural Ecology Model (1981, 1998), and Mickelson’s “Attitude-Achievement Paradox,” (1990) are not without their detractors. Some researchers assert that the models have glaring omissions that call into question the validity of the research (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Cousins, 2008; Spencer & Harpalani, 2008). Other researchers present evidence that they believe contradicts the assertions made by Fordham, Ogbu, and Mickelson (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Cook & Ludwig, 1997, 2008; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). In the following section, I present evidence that counters the research previously discussed.

**Challenging collective identity and the “burden of acting White.”**

More than 30 years after it was first advanced, Ogbu’s (1981) cultural ecological model remains one of the most debated explanations for the academic underachievement of Black students (Foster, 2008). His model is verified as important to the scholarship on the topic by the volume of articles that comment upon it, support it, and refute it. Its’ naysayers point to the model’s use of culture of poverty arguments (Gould, 1999), the model’s inflexibility as it relates to recognizing the range of behaviors among Black students (Cousins, 2008), and its’ overall focus on the failure of Black students (Cook & Ludwig, 2008; Downey, et al., 2009; Horvat &
In this section I discuss empirical studies conducted by Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey (1998) and Spencer & Harpalani (2008) that contradict the work of Ogbu and Fordham.

Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey (1998) argue that a major flaw in Fordham & Ogbu’s research is that they do not conduct a direct comparison with White students. Given that Black students exhibit optimistic educational expectations (Downey, et al., 2009; Mickelson, 1990), they believe that Black students may be similarly optimistic about their occupational chances. If this is true, then Ogbu’s claim that Blacks have developed an oppositional cultural frame of reference due to pessimistic views about their futures must be questioned. Similarly, the researchers were not convinced that Black students exhibit greater resistance to school than White students. They acknowledge that a subset of students may hold anti-schooling attitudes, but the unanswered question is whether or not there is a significant difference in schooling attitudes between Blacks and Whites. The researchers also question whether high-achieving Black students are negatively sanctioned for their “acting White” by their peers and whether those sanctions account for the racial gap in academic achievement.

Using National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) data from 2,197 Black, 653 Asian-American, and 13,942 White students, the researchers found evidence that contradicts the oppositional cultural frame of reference research. This quantitative study found that Black students are significantly more likely to report that education is important to getting a job later in life, and to be more optimistic about occupational outcomes than White students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998). According to their study, Black students are also significantly more likely than their White peers to report good treatment by teachers; less likely to agree that it is okay to break rules; and more likely to report satisfaction for doing what they are supposed to do.
in class (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998). Using the NELS data, Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey (1998) also show that, relative to White students, Black students are especially popular when they are seen as very strong students, a claim that directly contradicts previous research (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Nasir, et al., 2009; Ogbu, 2004; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008). These findings are supported by studies conducted by other researchers that found that there are no significant differences between Black and White students about education or future job prospects, that Black students are no more likely to be unpopular for academic success, and that Black and White students report similar academic engagement as measured by school attendance and time spent on homework (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Cook & Ludwig, 1997; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; O'Connor, 1997; Tyson, et al., 2005).

There may also be conceptual flaws from both a sociohistorical and an identity and adolescent development context inherent in the “acting White” hypothesis (Spencer & Harpalani, 2008). Historically, Blacks have placed a high value on education (Spencer, et al., 2003). Spencer & Harpalani (2008) believe that presenting the “acting White” hypothesis in a decontextualized and ahistorical manner diminishes its’ validity and ignores how individual youth make meaning of their circumstances. A more glaring omission is that Fordham & Ogbu (1986) do not consider identity formation processes, particularly those related to race. Rather than view Black youth as developing beings, they take a deficit-oriented perspective for the group without allowing for varying levels of academic engagement due to different stages of adolescent development and their formation of racial identities.

In a study of 562 Black adolescents, Spencer et al. used Cross’ Nigrescence model to identify where respondents fall among the four stages of racial identity for Blacks (Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, & Harpalani, 2001). They found that those identified as either having a “Eurocentric”
orientation or having a “reactive Afrocentric” orientation showed lower academic achievement and self-esteem (Spencer, et al., 2001). Black students with a “proactive Afrocentric” orientation performed better than other Black students. This study contradicts Fordham and Ogbu’s claim that Blacks who achieve academically have to distance themselves from their cultures in order to succeed. In fact, the students with a strong sense of Black cultural identity performed the best academically (Chavous, et al., 2003; Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Eccles, Wong, & Peck, 2006; Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001; Spencer, et al., 2001; Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997).

**Challenging the attitude-achievement paradox.**

Mickelson’s (1990) study suggests that the pro-school attitudes exhibited by Black students do not provide an accurate picture of the academic orientations of Black students. Downey, Ainsworth, and Qian (2009) claim that the distinction between abstract and concrete attitudes toward school is not a critical distinction. They believe that what is important is to determine whether blacks’ pro-school attitudes are restricted to those that do not predict achievement rather than to simply dismiss their pro-school attitudes as inconsequential or not authentic (Farkas, Lleras, & Maczuga, 2002; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Mickelson, 1990). Using NELS data from 2000 from 11,124 respondents with valid information, Downey et al. attempted to assess the school-attitude orientation of several subgroups: Blacks (n=1,065), Whites (n=7,739), Latinos (n=1,419), Asian-Americans (n=779), and Native Americans (n=122).

The results of the Downey et al. (2009) study were mixed. Some pro-school attitudes were predictive of educational attainment, while others were not. Six attitudes (importance of education, educational expectations, okay to break rules, satisfaction from doing well in school, seen as good student, and seen as troublemaker) predicted educational attainment, while four
attitudes (treatment by teachers, attitude toward teachers, okay to cheat, and tries hard) were not predictive. Since several of Black students’ pro-school attitudes are predictive of educational attainment, Downey et al. conclude that we have to view Blacks’ pro-school attitudes with legitimacy and not attempt to explain the Black-White achievement gap in terms of a difference in attitudes toward school (Downey, et al., 2009).

Support for the Guiding Theories

The previous section delineates some of the reasons that Ogbu’s cultural-ecology model (1981, 1998), Fordham & Ogbu’s “burden of acting White” (1986), and Mickelson’s (1990) “Attitude-Achievement Paradox” are not universally accepted as explanations for the academic underachievement of Black students. However, even given their limitations, these theories together offer a comprehensive evaluation of Black student underperformance. At their foundation, along with Steele’s theories related to school identification and “stereotype threat” (1992, 1995) are critiques of society-at-large, educational institutions, and the pervasive racism that persists in the United States. Taken together, these conditions have created an environment that lead to academic disengagement for many Black students. It is evident that the relatively low academic performance of Black students is a complex issue that cannot be explained by any particular theory, yet this combination of theories allows me to explore the influence that society, schools, family, peers, and the individual have in the achievement gap.

On a societal level, we know that Black males are at greater risk than Whites for arrest and incarceration (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992). Black people are more likely to live in urban neighborhoods characterized by a lack of resources, fewer jobs, and high crime rates (Lee & Madyun, 2009; Stewart, et al., 2007; Williams, et al., 2002). We also know that Black women are overrepresented in the lowest paying, lowest status jobs where they are often the victims of
race-based promotional discrimination (Ortiz & Roscigno, 2009) and that Black men earn less money than White men, even when controlling for education level (Black, Haviland, Sanders, & Taylor, 2006).

Schools could serve as bastions of hope and upward mobility for Blacks, but instead they are often a reflection of society’s unfair treatment of Black students and contribute to their academic disengagement. Bowles & Gintis (2002) assert that schools “prepare people for adult work rules, by socializing people to function . . . in the hierarchical structure of the modern corporation” (p. 1). To achieve this, schools structure social interactions and rewards to mimic the environment in the workplace, thereby preserving a hegemonic society where minorities remain on the fringes (Apple, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 2002). Rather than work to help minority students change the social and economic conditions that oppress them, schools and their agents actually help students to adapt to and accept their conditions (Freire, 1970).

In their 1995 study, Oakes & Guiton (1995) found that race and social class signal academic ability and impact the academic “track” that students are placed on. Teachers and administrators often justify their decisions to track students on differences in support, motivation, and interest but the end result signals to minority students that they are not capable of excelling academically (Burris, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008). The evidence shows that lower-track courses depress academic achievement since the academic demands and teacher expectations do not approximate the rigor and expectations for the academically advanced classes (Oakes, 1985). Students in lower-level classes have less access than their peers in high-level classes to high status knowledge, less opportunity to participate in stimulating learning activities, and form fewer meaningful relationships that could foster engagement (Oakes, 2008).
Tracking is only one of several educational institutional barriers that Black students face. Minority students stand to gain the most from college counseling, yet they are least likely to receive adequate, timely information in their schools (McDonough, 1997, 2005; Plank & Jordan, 2001). Teachers’ perceptions and expectations are integral in determining students’ school adjustment and identification (Ferguson, 2003; Oates, 2003). In a study of 1,872 elementary school children in 83 classrooms, McKown and Weinstein (2008) found that in ethnically diverse classrooms, teachers’ expectations of White and Asian students were significantly higher than the expectations of Black and Latino children and that the achievement gap was exacerbated by the difference in teacher expectation (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Casteel (1998) also found that White boys in the classroom received the most favorable treatment from teachers and had the most student-teacher contact whereas Black boys and their teachers had more negative interactions relative to other students (Casteel, 1998).

Ogbu (1981), Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Mickelson (1990), and Steele (1995) point to these societal and institutional inequities as reasons for the academic underachievement of Black students. Though some researchers have challenged their work (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Spencer & Harpalani, 2008), empirical data support their claims. In two separate studies, one using the same dataset that Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) used to reject the existence of an oppositional culture and burden of “acting White,” and one using a new data set, Farkas et al. found that in high minority schools, Black males and females who were very good students were more likely to be ridiculed by peers than similar White students (Farkas, et al., 2002). Interestingly, they also found that in schools that are more than 25% White, the correlation between race and being ridiculed is non-existent. These findings
suggest that there is a strong indicator that an oppositional culture does exist in high minority schools, but it dissipates as schools become more White.

Mickelson also responded to the criticisms of both her work and the work of Fordham and Ogbu (1986), and conducted a study to test the validity of the oppositional culture theory and her own attitude-achievement model (Mickelson, 2008). Data were collected from 1,833 twelfth-grade students and 2,311 eighth-grade students attending school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District. She found that students simultaneously hold abstract, concrete, and oppositional attitudes and that abstract attitudes have no effect on achievement, concrete attitudes have a positive effect on grades, and oppositional attitudes negatively affect performance. The stronger a student’s oppositional attitudes, the more the student believed that academic achievement compromised their cultural identity. Furthermore, males hold stronger oppositional attitudes than females even when controlling for parent education level and income. Among twelfth graders there was no significant relationship found between race and oppositional attitude, yet Black eighth graders were significantly more likely to hold oppositional attitudes than White eighth graders. That twelfth graders do not show a correlation between race and oppositional attitudes seems to undermine Ogbu’s theory, but the fact that Black middle school students hold significantly stronger oppositional attitudes than Whites suggests that there are race differences. The relatively high Black dropout rate between eighth and twelfth grade may account for this finding. The students with the strongest oppositional attitudes may self-select out of school prior to twelfth grade, leaving in school only the most engaged students with the least oppositional attitudes.

Given the depth of the research conducted on oppositional culture, “acting White,” attitude-achievement paradox, and stereotype threat, there is sufficient evidence to support the
use of these theories to frame my understanding of Black student underachievement. The next section of this chapter discusses how resilience helps students overcome barriers and find academic success through the family, peer, community, and institutional domains.

**Resilience and Education**

Borne of centuries of oppression and degradation, sociocultural and institutional influences may present a daunting challenge to educational achievement for Black students. However, there is great heterogeneity among Black students related to their academic performance. Thousands of Black high school seniors matriculate into four-year colleges and universities annually, though at disproportionately lower numbers than White students. For organizations that are interested in improving the academic outcomes of Black students, it is important to increase the knowledge and understanding of the reasons that some students are able to overcome the negative conditions that they face and achieve success (Benard, 1991; Masten, 1994; Winfield, 1994).

Resilience is generally defined as competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation or development (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), where competence is the effective adaptation to a given environment (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Masten, et al., 1995; Masten, et al., 1988). More specifically related to the purpose of this study, *educational resilience* refers to educational achievement outcome anomalies that occur after an individual has been exposed to statistical risk factors (Morales, 2008). Minority status, one of several educational risk factors, has been shown to impact academic achievement for Black students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; K. A. Gordon, 1995; Harrell, 2000; Mickelson, 1990; Steele, 1992; R. D. Taylor, 1994).
Resilient children possess similar qualities that help them deal with risk. Individual characteristics of resilient children include: good intellectual functioning, high self-esteem and self-control, an internal locus of control, optimism, strong motivation, sense of purpose, goal-oriented, and a high self-concept (Benard, 1991; Condly, 2006; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Floyd, 1996; K. A. Gordon, 1995; K. Griffin & Allen, 2006; Hebert & Reis, 1999; Luthar, 1991; Rutter, 1987; Waxman, 1997; Werner, 1989). Gordon (1995) studied 138 Black high school sophomores attending school in an urban environment to understand how resilience was related to academic self-concept and personal agency beliefs. Resilient Black students had a higher self-concept of their cognitive abilities than their non-resilient peers and this higher self-concept was associated with positive academic achievement. The greater emphasis that resilient students placed on extra-curricular activities also was positively related to academic performance. There are many possible explanations as to why resilient students emphasize extra-curricular participation. One potential reason is that resilient students understand that participation in activities outside of the classroom is important and is a good avenue for self-development. Furthermore, they enhance their chances of university admission. Resilient students also placed greater emphasis on their futures, specifically on future material gain, than their non-resilient peers. The resilient students held a stronger belief that it was important to increase their financial security and independence than their peers and these beliefs were also positively associated with academic achievement. Possibly their focus on their futures served as either protective or compensatory factors against risk (Hebert & Reis, 1999; Wang, 1997).

In addition to the individual characteristics that resilient children possess, familial support and support from external entities work together to aid children and facilitate resilience in those who are at-risk (Garmezy, 1991; Werner, 1989). Studies have shown the correlation between all
three factors and resilience (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1987), yet it should be noted that no causal link between these factors and resilience has been established (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Even without a proven causal link, however, researchers and practitioners support attempts to increase resilience by strengthening compensatory and protective factors that lessen the effect of stressors or protect the individual from the negative impact of the risk (Benard, 1991; Cowen, Wyman, Work, & Iker, 1995; Floyd, 1996; Hebert & Reis, 1999; Luthar, 1991; Rutter, 1987).

Rutter (1987) identifies four ways to reduce risk and thereby increase resilience and performance among at-risk students. The first method, “risk reduction”, entails an alteration of the meaning or danger of the risk variable, or altering the child’s exposure to or involvement with the risk. For Black students, this could mean that if negative peer sanctions for academic achievement are a “risk,” then one could move the student to a school where academic achievement is celebrated rather than ridiculed. The second method, “reduction of negative chain reactions”, refers to protective mechanisms that interrupt the compounding effect that can be associated with long-term risk exposure. Again, if Black students experience academic “risk” through negative sanctions from peers for academic achievement and those peer groups exacerbate the risk by encouraging school delinquency and other oppositional behavior (negative chain reaction), then a faith-based program can host workshops that teach students alternatives to oppositional behavior, thereby interrupting the chain reaction and mitigating the impact of the “risk.” The development of “self-esteem” and “self-efficacy” is a third method that can limit the impact of risk exposure. Personal relationships with parents or other adults and successful task accomplishment bolster self-efficacy and self-esteem among young people (Bandura, 1977; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Rutter, 1987). Finally, “opportunities,” particularly quality educational
opportunities, are an important way to counteract risk because educational experiences provide people with access to careers and social and cultural networks that they may otherwise not have had access to (Floyd, 1996; Rutter, 1987; Winfield, 1994; Wolkow & Ferguson, 2001).

**Family and resilience.**

Positive familial relationships, particularly with the primary caregiver, are a key component for developing resilience in children and adolescents (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Gribble, et al., 1993; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Werner, 1989). In a study designed to assess the specific dimensions of the parent-child relationship that shape risk resilience, Gribble et al. (1993) found that stress-resilient children and parents reported more: (a) positive parental attitudes of warmth, acceptance, and regard for the child; (b) parental involvement in joint activities with children; and (c) more use of authoritative discipline styles as opposed to other parenting styles than their stress-affected counterparts. Other studies have found that for Black children, a Black version of authoritative parenting that is more demanding and less accommodating to the child’s demands is most related to academic achievement (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Henry, & Florsheim, 2000; Mandara, 2006). An authoritative parenting style is associated with the formation of positive peer groups, fewer instances of delinquency, and more academic engagement (Benard, 1991).

There are many ways for parents to become involved in the education of their children. There is no consensus as to what type of parent involvement in the educational process actually impacts educational achievement (Mandara, 2006), but parent involvement generally has been demonstrated to lead to positive academic outcomes (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Auerbach, 2007; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Parents can promote educational resilience by developing the student’s capacity
for learning, influencing how the student views themselves within the larger social context, and creating the lens through which events are evaluated (Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). This type of involvement is particularly important for Black students who often live in social conditions and attend schools that do not foster achievement (Lee & Madyun, 2009; Stewart, et al., 2007). Neblett et al. (2006) demonstrated that academic curiosity was positively associated with self-worth messages, egalitarian messages, and racial socialization behaviors. On the other end of the spectrum, they found that perceived racial discrimination is negatively correlated to academic curiosity, academic persistence, and academic outcomes (Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Parent influence can help their children make meaning and counter the negative societal and institutional pressures that they may face. Other studies have found that parent racial socialization messages that reflect pride in Black culture promote self-esteem (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002) and lead to better problem-solving skills and greater retaining of factual knowledge (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002). A meta-analysis of quantitative studies on parent involvement found that the strongest indicator of academic success did not come from active participation at the school or by home supervision, but rather came from parent aspirations and expectations for their children (Fan & Chen, 2001; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005). Parents can play an integral role in the educational resilience of children by positively redefining what it means to be Black and providing the nurturing and care that lead to increased self-esteem and self-efficacy.

**Peers and resilience.**

According to Wang et al. (1994), “opportunities to interact with students who have high achievement motivation, positive attitudes toward school, and a positive academic self-concept are beneficial to students who are considered at-risk . . .” In a study of low-income Black and
Latino urban public high school graduates, data revealed that even when controlling for ability variables, having most or all of one’s friends plan to attend a four-year college is the best indicator of one’s own college attendance (Sokatch, 2006). A similar study found that for Black students, their friends’ school orientations significantly predicted grades, test scores, value on being a good student, and perceived school competence (Cauce, 1986). Hebert and Reis (1999) conducted a study of high-achieving, academically able students to determine what about their high school experiences propelled them to academic success. Their qualitative study combined case study methodology, participant observation, and interviews over the course of two and one-half years. Among their findings, Hebert and Reis (1999) found that high-achieving students used their peer networks to support them academically, and in turn provided similar support for other high-achieving students within their peer network. The inclusion within a network of high achieving, academically motivated peers serves to encourage continued academic achievement and buffer at-risk minority students from pressure to disengage from school (Hemmings, 1996; Kahne & Bailey, 1999; Williams, et al., 2002). Academically engaged peers also help to redefine the “risk” that some Black students attribute to their cultural identity as a result of academic achievement.

**Community and resilience.**

Communities can foster resilience in youth by: providing children with support through caring interactions with adults, providing access to social organizations, enforcing pro-social agreed upon community norms, and providing opportunities for youth to participate in the life of the community (Benard, 1991; E. W. Gordon & Song, 1994; Strayhorn, 2009; Williams, et al., 2002; Wolkow & Ferguson, 2001). In a study of over 1,000 children who participated in a youth mentoring program, findings demonstrate that students with mentors were less likely to use drugs
or alcohol, attended school more, had higher grades, and felt more competent about school work than a control group of similar peers (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). A similar study found that students who participated in community-based programs were: less likely to miss school, had an increased sense of self-control, had a heightened academic self-concept, and demonstrated greater efforts to meet their future goals (Nettles, 1991).

Outreach programs are another service within the community that can increase the educational resilience of Black students. Generally, educational outreach programs adopt one of two models. Most programs are student-centered and provide their services to participants with a targeted cohort approach in which a subset of the school population is identified because they are low-income, first-generation college-going, underrepresented minority, or low-achieving academically (Domina, 2009; Perna, 2002). Student-centered programs operate with the underlying assumption that students make a rational choice about whether to pursue post-secondary education based upon the likelihood that they will be admitted and experience success in college, as well as the returns they will receive because of their educational attainment (Domina, 2009). Their program activities range from academic services, to college information and counseling, to services for parents, and are structured to increase the likelihood of student academic success and impact the academic expectations of students and their parents (Domina, 2009; Gandara, 2002; Gandara & Bial, 2001; D. Myers, Olsen, Sefior, Young, & Tuttle, 2004; Perna, 2002; Swail, 2000). The underlying assumption is that if students experience educational success; have accurate college information; and have developed a connection to the college atmosphere; then they will be more likely to pursue education beyond high school.

An alternate approach to the student-centered program is a school-wide approach to outreach. The philosophy of these programs is that educational aspiration and achievement is a
function of the students’ environment and social influences (Domina, 2009). These programs hold the assumption that academic performance and college aspirations are the result of teacher expectations and peer behavior, which differs from the “rational choice” framework adopted by student-centered programs (Domina, 2009). These programs seek to impact the entire school community by creating an academic environment that promotes student success (Domina, 2009). Their services include targeting college information and recruitment for all students at a particular school or grade level, working with school administrators and counselors to improve their familiarity with college information, and making advanced courses more available to all students (Domina, 2009). Outreach programs and mentoring programs provide students with the external support from caring individuals that intervene in their academic trajectories and open opportunities for their futures.

Churches and other faith-based institutions are still another entity within the community that helps to foster resilience for students. An estimated 65,000-75,000 Black churches exist throughout the nation (not including the small, independent churches not affiliated with major denominations), with approximately 84% of Black Americans considering themselves religious and 80% believing that it is important to send their children to church (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). Central to the work of the church is its’ commitment to addressing the social, political, and educational needs of the Black community (Billingsley & Rodriguez, 1998). Billingsley and Caldwell (1991) found that of the 315 churches that they studied, 70% were involved in some form of community outreach including educational programs, family support programs, and elderly service programs. In their study, schools (76%) were second to only the local police departments (83%) as the agencies that Black churches held formal partnerships with (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). Through mentoring programs and educational assistance
programs, churches and faith-based institutions seek to and do in fact provide a powerful buffer against societal risk factors.

**Schools and resilience.**

Just as families, peers, and communities can foster educational resilience in Black children, schools can also play an important role in protecting youth from educational risk factors (Benard, 1991; Garmezy, 1991; Hebert & Reis, 1999; Wang, et al., 1994). Schools that foster resilience have many characteristics in common: an academic emphasis, high expectations that are clearly articulated, requisite information and resources, and partnership between school, family, and community (Jarsky, McDonough, & Nunez, 2009; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002). Minority students are less likely to have family members or community members who are equipped to facilitate their college-going efforts, so school networks can provide the necessary guidance and encouragement to students who otherwise would not have it (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009).

College culture reflects an environment that is accessible to all students and provides students with information, resources, and both formal and informal conversations to help students prepare for postsecondary education (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McDonough, 1997, 2005). It is not simply the dissemination of accurate college information that fosters resilience for minority students. Caring relationships with teachers, counselors, and other administrators who are devoted to developing students serves to increase students’ commitment to academics and to reaching their future goals (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Masten, 1994; Somers, et al., 2008; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). A school culture that promotes the achievement of all students cultivates educational resilience for students who may not have the social capital that leads to academic success and college enrollment (McDonough, 2004).
Teachers have the most direct contact with students in a school, and their perceptions of their students have been found to impact student performance. In fact, teacher expectations and student academic performance are more strongly linked for Black students than for White students (Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996; McKown & Weinstein, 2002). However, teachers disproportionately hold lower expectations for Black and Latino students than they do for their White and Asian peers (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). These data suggest that one way that teachers can foster resilience in Black students is by holding high expectations for this group of students, thereby lessening the achievement gap and demonstrating an ethic of care for these students.

Teachers also have the ability to improve a student’s feelings of self-efficacy or perceived self-confidence. Bandura’s (1977) research on self-efficacy development postulates that the more instances of success that individuals experience, the more capable and empowered they begin to feel. In environments that have not traditionally been supportive or where individuals have not experienced success, those experiences can help an individual overcome adversity and risk.

Counselors can play a similar role to teachers in opening opportunities for students and allowing them to experience success in the educational arena. Although there is no data that proves that academic tracking benefits students on any academic level, Black students are still disproportionately placed in low-track classes when compared to their White peers (Oakes, 1985; Oakes & Guiton, 1995). We know that the lower-track courses do not give students an equal opportunity to learn because they spend less time on the academic subject matter, have lower quality instructors, and lower classroom expectations than the higher-track classes (Oakes, 1985; Oakes & Guiton, 1995). Increased opportunities is a key way to promote resilience in students.
(Rutter, 1987), and counselors and school administrators can provide greater educational opportunities for all students by eliminating practices like tracking that serve to compound educational risk factors rather than eliminate them.

**Resilience and resistance.**

Academic success and resilience can be developed outside of the sociocultural and institutional domains discussed. Resistance theories offer a strong complement to the resilience literature that exists, particularly when discussing marginalized groups like Black Americans. Resistance theory differs from resilience theory in that resistance theory emphasizes that people negotiate and create meaning of their own through their interactions with outside entities like family, peers, schools, and community rather than being acted upon by said entities (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Resistance theory is built on a foundation of human agency, or the ability of one to determine life outcomes for themselves (Abowitz, 2000).

Resistance can manifest itself in various ways. On one end of the spectrum there is self-defeating resistance which refers to the traditional view of school resistance (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). It is here that we find students who may drop-out of school or behave inappropriately because of oppressive conditions in their communities or in their schools (Ogbu, 1981; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Wiggan, 2007). While many would mark this type of behavior as deviant, resistance theorists emphasize that these behaviors are acts of resistance “by actors who are conscious of a public problem as they perceive and experience it, and who express their helplessness, despair, or rage through oppositional behavior” (Abowitz, 2000, p. 890). The trouble with this type of resistance is that the behavior demonstrated is ultimately destructive to the individual.
In an in-depth study of nine educationally resilient Black students, Carter, D. (2008) found that her participants (a) held a critical consciousness about the role that race plays in the opportunity structure in both school and in society, (b) were committed to maintain both a positive racial identity and high academic performance, and (c) held a belief in individual agency that would allow them to succeed despite the racism they encountered. These students recognized the need for social justice, yet worked toward social justice by achieving within the existing oppressive system. They were not likely to question the curriculum being offered, challenge unfair disciplinary practices, or examine the effect of socioeconomic factors on educational achievement (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This conformist resistance is a step up from self-defeating resistance in that it is a more productive response to racism, yet without offering a critique of the system it cannot offer the greatest possibility for systemic change (E. Gordon, 2005; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

The final form of resistance, transformational resistance, stands apart from the other forms because it offers both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This type of resistance can take on many forms. Internal transformational resisters engage in subtle behaviors while fighting against oppression and for social justice. These individuals may enter service professions like teaching, social work, or the legal field with the intent of advocating for the marginalized within their communities (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). A study of two Native American students in higher education demonstrated internal transformative resistance in practice (Brayboy, 2005). Upon graduating from their Ivy League universities, both individuals “use[d] the knowledge and credentials provided by [their schools] to resist assimilation and to struggle for the empowerment of their tribal groups” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 208). External transformational resistance involves
more overt behavior in opposition to oppression. In a study of seven girls from the Nation of Islam (NOI), Akom found that these young women held a strong belief in their own ability to improve their lives and uplift the Black community (2008). In one instance, a teacher told her class prior to distributing a written quiz that she did not trust them because all students cheat. Three of the NOI females in the class immediately protested being characterized as cheaters and demanded that the teacher apologize. These students were taught to not simply accept poor treatment, but rather to advocate for themselves (Akom, 2008). Akom claims that the NOI women’s response to schooling “may be considered transformative . . . because the agency the students display comes from a unique form of religious socialization which produces a social consciousness whereby students are encouraged to politicize their cultural resistance and develop counter-ideologies” (Akom, 2008, p. 209). Resistance theory, therefore, is another important aspect of understanding Black student achievement in the face of adversity.

Summary

The objective of this study is to examine the educational resilience of Black students admitted to UCLA, a highly selective university. Resilience and resistance theories, specifically those advanced by Rutter (1987), Garmezy (1991), Masten (1998), and Solorzano & Delgado Bernal (2001) will provide the theoretical framework necessary to explore this phenomenon. Ogbu’s (1981, 1998) cultural-ecology model, Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) “Burden of Acting White,” Mickelson’s (1990) “Attitude-Achievement Paradox,” and Steele’s (1992, 1997) School Engagement and Stereotype Threat form the foundation for how I understand the Black-White achievement gap. I will use these theories along with survey data and interviews from educationally resilient Black students to gain a greater understanding of how resilient students perceived the sociocultural and institutional influences that they encountered during their
educational careers thus far. This understanding is important for universities, schools, and academic outreach programs that serve Black students and seek to foster greater resilience for them. The next chapter will provide the methodology that will be used to conduct this study.

Chapter Three
Methodology

The previous chapters have detailed the educational underachievement of Black students. Regardless of the measure used to assess educational achievement, Black students do not achieve on par with their White peers. When comparing Black and White students, nearly twice as many Black students drop-out of school; Black students’ reading and math scores are markedly lower; Black students take less rigorous academic courses; and therefore, Black students are less likely to enroll in college immediately following high school (Aud, et al., 2010; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Nord, et al., 2011). Although the college-going rate for Black high school students is on the rise, the gap between the college-going rates of Black students and White students has more than tripled since 1972, going from a 5% gap up to a 16% gap (Aud, et al., 2010).

Methodology of the Study

This study employed a concurrent transformative mixed methods strategy utilizing both quantitative survey data and qualitative focus groups and interviews. Mixed research has gained popularity in the social sciences because researchers have found that both qualitative and quantitative methods are useful to answer their research questions (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell, 2009). Mixed methods research generally has at least one of five purposes including: (1) triangulation of data from the different methods; (2) complementarity (ie. seeking to elaborate, enhance, or clarify findings from one method with findings from another);
(3) development by using findings from one method to inform the other method; (4) identifying paradoxes or contradictions that may lead to modifying the research questions; and (5) expanding the breadth of research by using different methods to answer different research questions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). Data gathered from this study was triangulated across the various data collection methods and allowed me to answer research questions designed specifically for quantitative and qualitative methods.

A distinguishing characteristic of my particular study is that it utilized a concurrent transformative approach. My research is transformative in nature in that it used critical race theory as a theoretical framework that guided all facets of my study including purpose, definition of the problem, research questions, methodological choices (counter-storytelling), analysis, interpretation, and reporting (Creswell, 2009). My study is defined as concurrent because the quantitative and qualitative analysis took place simultaneously and independently and both forms of data collection were given equal weight in the analysis process (Burke Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative methodology.

Narratives are an important form of qualitative data collection because they allow the researcher to elicit the participants’ lived experiences and allow us to study how humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Merriam, 2009). Central to narrative research methodology is the understanding that the participant is the expert and best authority to explain their experiences, and it is through dialogue that researchers can discover subordinated ideas that challenge conventional wisdom or accepted theories (Fraser, 2004; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Critical race methodology.
My study was designed to challenge the dominant discourse that asserts that there are inherent problems with Black culture that prevent most Black students from academic achievement. I contend that social and economic inequities have created conditions that discourage academic engagement, but many Black students have managed to overcome those conditions and achieve high levels of academic success. Critical race theory and methodology espouse five tenets that guided my narrative research. These beliefs are (1) race and racism maintain their prevalence in society; (2) the dominant ideology that educational institutions are objective and race neutral should be challenged; (3) the research should be committed to social justice; (4) experiential knowledge is central; and (5) an interdisciplinary perspective is necessary for understanding and contextualizing what we observe in society (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002b; Tate, 1997). The use of counter-stories allows the participant and researcher to expose, analyze, and challenge the racial privilege enjoyed by the majority (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002b).

The foundation of my research is built around the five tenets of critical race theory mentioned above. I identified and interviewed Black UCLA students because I believed that their educational experiences might illuminate the inequity that exists throughout the educational system for Black students. The use of narrative inquiry allowed me to capture first-hand accounts from the individuals who have overcome difficult educational conditions. I believe that researchers and practitioners can gain valuable insight from these educationally resilient students who have earned admission into a highly selective university. Ultimately, my research has a social justice orientation in that it exposes inequities that exist and provides recommendations for how to ensure that more Black students have access to selective universities nationwide.

There are many strengths to a qualitative study. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies allow for data to be categorized based upon categories developed by the research
participants (Burke Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004). Qualitative studies also allow the researcher to study and describe complex phenomena, like educational resilience, in great depth with a limited number of participants (Burke Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004; Payne & Williams, 2005). Some weaknesses of qualitative research are that the knowledge produced may not be generalizable, it does not lend itself to making predictions, and the results may be challenged as reflecting the biases of the researcher (Burke Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004).

**Quantitative methodology.**

At its’ core, quantitative survey research allows the researcher to generalize from a sample to a population in efforts to make inferences about a characteristic or behavior in question (Creswell, 2009; Fowler, 2009). For my research, I administered a resilience survey to Black UCLA students to: (a) determine the relationship between resilience protective factors; (b) determine if protective factors are predictive of internal attributes consistent with educationally resilient students; and (c) compare resilience results obtained from educationally resilient Black UCLA students and a statewide pool of students who completed the same survey.

Quantitative methods address some of the inherent weaknesses of qualitative studies. Quantitative studies are effective for testing and (in)validating existing theories (Burke Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004). They also enable the researcher or other individuals to replicate the study among other populations and provide precise, numerical data (Burke Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004; Fowler, 2009). Quantitative studies are not without their weaknesses. They are prescriptive in what they are able to measure, leaving little to no room for responses that deviate from the categories or theories that the researcher has decided to test (Burke Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004).

**Research Design**
For my study, I collected 104 resilience surveys from Black UCLA students. I adapted the California Healthy Kids Resilience Module to administer to undergraduate students. This survey is administered to approximately 600,000 students annually throughout California (Hanson & Kim, 2007), though I selected the Black, 11th grade respondents as a comparison group for my study. The survey was developed to measure protective factors for at-risk middle and high school students (i.e., school caring relationships, home high expectations, community meaningful participation). I changed the language of the survey questions to the past tense so that respondents responded about their high school educational experiences. The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance tested the psychometric properties of the secondary school resilience module to empirically determine whether the factor structure was consistent with the theoretical framework of resilience in youth (Hanson & Kim, 2007). Internal consistency estimates of reliability of the derived scales were calculated using Cronbach’s alpha for each gender, grade, and ethnic group (Hanson & Kim, 2007). Hanson and Kim (2007) found that the secondary school module is comprehensive and balanced and that the subscales exhibit good internal consistency on the survey constructs. Of the 11 constructs that I measured, the items measuring “Goals/Aspirations” did not provide a valid assessment of the construct across different ethnic groups. However, since this study is looking specifically at Black students, the “Goals/Aspirations” construct provides a reliable measure for my group.

From among the survey respondents, I identified 15 Black UCLA students to participate in one of two hour-long focus groups. From the survey respondents, I also identified 15 additional students to participate in two 40 minute, in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Through the interviews, I examined the students’ educational histories, particularly
focusing on the barriers and supports that existed throughout their academic careers. My research design was driven by the following questions:

1. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the institutional influences that they encountered in their pursuits of higher education?

2. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the sociocultural influences that they encountered in their pursuits of higher education?

3. Are there factors beyond the sociocultural or institutional influences that facilitated educational resilience in Black students?

4. To what extent do sociocultural and institutional influences predict educational resilience?

5. Do the sociocultural and institutional influences differ between Black UCLA students and California Black high school graduates-at-large?

Consistent with an advocacy/participatory worldview that demands that research address social issues like inequality, oppression, and empowerment, I employed a narrative research strategy that studied the academic histories of my participants and asked them to provide stories about their academic careers (Creswell, 2009). This study explored the experiences of educationally resilient Black students, and therefore speaks to issues of how marginalized groups can empower themselves despite adverse circumstances. This type of research is important because the story of Black student underachievement is often told from a “majoritarian” perspective, a narrative that communities of color often internalize (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002b). Critical race methodology, a key component of my research methodology, is built on the “counter-story,” a narrative that relies on the lived experiences of members from disenfranchised groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002b). The value of the counter-story can be found in its ability to challenge society’s perceived wisdom and established belief systems (Delgado, 1989; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002a). The counter-story is not only important because it challenges majority ideology. Marginalized groups benefit by the psychological healing that results from countering their own
internalized negative feelings about themselves (Delgado, 1989). The voices of educationally resilient Black students provide an important counter-narrative to the story of Black student underachievement.

The goal of my study is to understand how educationally resilient students perceived and engaged sociocultural and institutional factors that influence educational achievement. Mixed methods research allowed me to both explore and understand the meaning that participants attributed to their educational experiences while simultaneously testing and validating resilience theory through a quantitative survey (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). For my study, both the depth of answers gained by qualitative research methods coupled with the empirical data gathered from surveys offer researchers and practitioners a broad and deep picture of resilience for highly successful Black students.

An important element of creating educational life stories is allowing participants to play an active role in the construction of their stories. I did this by sharing all interview transcripts and subsequent analysis with the participants for their review and feedback. This process enhanced the accuracy and validity of the study and fostered a deeper level of participation from the students.

**Site selection.**

I conducted my research at the University of California, Los Angeles, henceforth identified as “UCLA,” a large Research I public institution located in California. UCLA was chosen as the research site because of its highly competitive selection process. In 2011, UCLA

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10 For the freshman class of 2011, 15,560 of nearly 62,000 applicants were admitted. The average admitted freshman has a weighted grade point average of 4.3, a 2029 out of 2400 on the SAT, 53 semesters of academic coursework, and 20 semesters of honors/Advanced Placement courses.
admitted just 25% of all freshman applicants, and only 14% of all Black applicants.\footnote{11} Currently, UCLA undergraduate enrollment is over 26,000 undergraduates, of which only 1,099 (4\%) are Black. The rest of the undergraduate student body is comprised of 37\% Asian or Pacific Islander, 32\% White, 15\% Chicano/Latino, 6\% international, 4\% unstated/unknown, and .49\% Native American.\footnote{12}

Since Proposition 209 eliminated the use of affirmative action in California public university admissions, Black enrollment at UCLA has seen a precipitous decline. In 1995, prior to the elimination of affirmative action, UCLA admitted 693 Black students, representing 6.6\% of admitted freshman, a significantly larger number than the 434 Black students admitted as recently as 2010.\footnote{13} To address the crisis in Black admission and enrollment, the university has convened the UCLA Black Alumni Association and Community Support Task Force to provide ongoing counsel to the chancellor regarding concerns of Black alumni and community leaders, collaborate with UCLA administrators and faculty to implement legal measures to increase the number of Black students who apply to, are admitted, and enroll at UCLA, and promote discussion between UCLA leadership and the Black community. The university also supports numerous outreach programs that work to increase access to the university through tutoring and informational outreach. In 2001, the UC Regents adopted a comprehensive review system for application review that weighs academic achievement, personal achievement, and life challenges in the admissions process.

\footnote{11}{"Profile of Admitted freshmen Fall 2011": \url{www.admissions.ucla.edu/prospect/adm_fr/frosh_prof.htm}}

\footnote{12}{"Quick Facts about UCLA": \url{www.admissions.ucla.edu/campusprofile.htm}}

\footnote{13}{"Background: Decline in African-American admissions at UCLA": \url{newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/Background-Decline-in-African-7237.aspx?RelNum=7237}.}
The Black admissions and enrollment issue extends beyond the university. External organizations, like The Alliance for Equal Opportunity in Education (AEOE), have also been formed to put pressure on UC leadership to address inequities in the UC admissions process. The AEOE is comprised of national, state, and local African-American organizations including the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP, the Los Angeles Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) of Greater Los Angeles, the Brotherhood Crusade, local church leaders, educators, politicians, the UCLA Black Alumni Association, and the UCLA Afrikan Student Union (Ramon & Hunt, 2010). The pressure that AEOE placed on the university led to an overhaul of the admissions process to one that is fairer for all students (Ramon & Hunt, 2010).

Given the selectivity of UCLA, the relatively low number of Black students who are admitted and ultimately enroll at the university, and the importance of this issue to the university and external parties, UCLA’s Black students offer important insight into how they overcame obstacles to earn admission at a prestigious institution. It is important to note that UCLA was chosen as a representative of selective California schools that are characterized by low numbers of Black students. The data elicited from UCLA’s Black students should be applicable to any federally or state funded outreach program, university, church, community-based organization or other entity interested in increasing the number of educationally resilient Black students who are competitively admissible to colleges and universities throughout the country.

**Research participants.**

I surveyed 104 of the 1,099 Black UCLA undergraduates. I identified my sample by: email communication to the Afrikan Student Union (ASU) email listserv, fliers in the UCLA residence halls, fliers in the Student Activities Center and Campbell Hall (two hubs of academic and social life for minority students on campus), and presentations to members and affiliates of
Black student groups on campus including sororities and fraternities, the Afrikan Men and Afrikan Women’s Collective, and the Black Male Institute. Though there may be some Black students who were not sampled through these methods, this collection of student groups and recruitment locations offered a comprehensive group of potential participants.

Since my theoretical framework states that any Black student who gains admission to UCLA is educationally resilient, all Black UCLA students who earned admission to UCLA as freshmen were eligible to participate in this study. I surveyed a cross-section of UCLA students that reflect the diversity of the Black student population. UCLA’s Black population is comprised of approximately 60% females and 40% males, with over 70% coming from California public high schools. Approximately 45% report being 1st generation college-going, and 32% report family incomes of $40,000 or less. My sampling should reflect these demographic properties of the population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Comparison of Study Sample to Black UCLA population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-parent household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income below $40,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From among the 104 surveys, I identified two separate populations. I identified 15 students to participate in a focus group and 15 students to participate in the two individual interviews. Survey respondents were asked about their willingness to participate in the focus

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14 Data from “UC Statfinder” - http://statfinder.ucop.edu/statfinder
group and interview phases of the study. Those who indicated that they were interested were contacted via email and those who responded and fit the demographic criteria I was seeking were used (see tables 2 and 3 below).

| Table 2: Focus Group Participant Demographic Characteristics |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Gender | School Type | Income Level | Household | Parent Education |
| 5 male | 12 public | 5 less than $40k | 9 single-parent | 8 1st generation |
| 10 female | 3 private/charter | 10 more than $40k | 6 two-parent | 7 not 1st generation |

| Table 3: Interview Participant Demographic Characteristics |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Gender | School Type | Income Level | Household | Parent Education |
| 8 male | 10 public | 10 less than $40k | 9 single parent | 8 1st generation |
| 7 female | 5 private/charter | 5 more than $40k | 6 two-parent | 7 not 1st generation |

Participants reflect the cross-sectional diversity of Black UCLA students. Through my study, I attempted to gain a deeper understanding of a variety of experiences, positive and negative, that resilient Black students faced through their academic careers. The variability in gender, family composition, and income allowed for diversity within the sample and therefore gave me the opportunity to capture diverse narratives.

Clearly one could make the argument that there are many educationally resilient students who did not meet the criteria established for this study. For instance, the student who raises her grade point average from a 1.0 to a 3.3 would not meet my criteria though they did demonstrate educational resilience by raising their gpa so significantly. I agree that this student is also educationally resilient, but I have defined resilience for this study in the manner that I have because I believe that there is much to learn from the students who were able to reach the apex of academic achievement by earning admission to one of the most selective public institutions in the nation. We can learn from the experiences from these anomalies and apply the lessons to the
many students who need guidance and support. Another point of contention may be the argument that these students are not necessarily educationally resilient but instead are gifted students who naturally achieve in school. I am not making the argument that these students are not gifted. Rather, I am asserting that even if they are gifted, their achievement despite the sociocultural and institutional influences that exist for Black students is worth studying and understanding. Many gifted Black students fall through the cracks and do not demonstrate the resilience that I am studying.

**Research participant recruitment.**

I used a criterion-based, purposeful sampling technique to identify my study participants. Since my research is designed to study the educational resilience of Black UCLA students, I only surveyed and interviewed Black students. Purposeful sampling requires that the researcher identify participants whom the researcher would like to understand or gain the most insight from and who can provide information that cannot be obtained from other sources (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Random sampling methods provide representativeness of the population being studied only with large sample sizes, but criterion-based sampling helps the researcher to achieve representativeness with a much smaller sample (Maxwell, 2005). Since my study included a small sample, purposeful sampling technique was the best approach.

In order to identify my study participants, I created informational fliers that I posted in the residence halls, on bulletin boards in lecture halls, and throughout the Student Activity Center and Campbell Hall, two hubs of student activity at UCLA. I also sought study participants by informational emails sent through the Afrikan Student Union, Black Male Initiative, to the leaders of the Black sororities and fraternities, and the Afrikan Men and Afrikan Women’s Collectives.
Students who responded to the informational flier or to the emails received a survey. In addition to the resilience questions, the survey allowed me to collect students’ demographic information (name, ethnicity, gender, family background, estimated family income, parent education level), as well as information about their high schools. Their responses on the questionnaire allowed me to identify participants for focus groups and interviews who met my predetermined participant criteria.

Data Collection

My study consisted of three phases of data collection. The first phase included the dissemination and collection of a modified California Healthy Kids Resilience Module Survey. The second phase consisted of focus groups with 15 students. Finally, the third phase consisted of two individual interviews with 15 students, each interview lasting between 30-40 minutes.

Phase one – Survey

Multiple studies have concluded that three “external assets” or protective factors promote educational resilience – caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution – and these supports should be available in all facets of a student’s life including home, school, community, and among peers (Benard, 1991; Luthar, 1991; Masten, 1994; Rutter, 1987). Caring relationships can be understood as supportive connections to individuals in a student’s life who promote pro-social behavior and model ideal behavior. High expectations is understood to be the “consistent communication of direct and indirect messages that the student can succeed” ("Resilience and Youth Development," 2007). Meaningful participation is defined as involvement of the student in activities that promote responsibility and positive contribution. High levels of these protective factors are inversely correlated to negative,
risk behaviors among adolescents and could promote academic achievement by reducing known barriers to achievement.

The resilience module measures 12 external assets or protective factors. For all of the items in each scale, students were asked to how true each statement was for them on a scale of 1-4 where: 4=very much true; 3=pretty much true; 2=a little true; and 1=not true at all. The exception to this scoring system is with the “school connected” scale which was scored on a 5 point scale where: 5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 2=disagree; and 1=strongly disagree. See table 4 below.

The resilience model also measures six internal assets or resilience traits that are consistent with positive youth development: “cooperation and communication”, “self-efficacy”, “empathy”, “problem solving”, “self-awareness”, and “goals and aspirations” (“Resilience and Youth Development,” 2007). For my study, I isolated two internal scale variables, goals and aspirations and self-efficacy, to include in my survey. The six internal assets measured in the resilience module are important for positive youth development generally, but I chose the two variables that I believe are most related to educational resilience. Academic self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one’s ability to regulate one’s own learning and academic achievement, has been shown to promote high academic achievement, to determine academic aspirations, and to determine level of academic motivation (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Vittorio Carara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Goal setting has been demonstrated to impact beliefs about self-efficacy and academic performance (Schunk, 1990), and consistent with resilience theory, self-assertive goals like self-determination can be critical to a student’s achievement orientation (Covington, 2000; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The choice to include two internal constructs does not diminish the importance
of the other internal assets, but rather was a choice made to isolate critical college-going traits or characteristics.

One modification that I made to the survey was a change in the language from the present to the past tense. The survey is given to high school students, but since my study is asking college students to reflect back on their high school experiences, I changed the questions slightly to reflect the change in perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Sample Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-Caring Relationship</td>
<td>At my school, there is someone who really cares about me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-High Expectations</td>
<td>At my school, there is someone who believes I will be a success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Meaningful Participation</td>
<td>At school I do things that make a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Connected</td>
<td>I feel close to people at this school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Caring Relationship</td>
<td>At home there is someone who talks with me about my problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-High Expectations</td>
<td>At home there is someone who always wants me to do my best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Meaningful Participation</td>
<td>At home I do fun things or go fun places with my parents or other adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-Caring Relationship</td>
<td>I have a friend who helps me when I’m having a hard time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-High Expectations</td>
<td>My friends try to do well in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Caring Relationship</td>
<td>In my community there is someone who really cares about me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-High Expectations</td>
<td>In my community there is someone who tells</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community-Meaningful Participation
In my community I help other people

Goals & Aspirations
I planned to go to college or some other school after high school

Self-Efficacy
I could do most things if I tried

Phase Two – Focus groups.

The second phase of data collection consisted of two focus groups, each consisting of seven or eight participants. Focus groups allow multiple participants to discuss a common topic, discuss their individual experiences, and attempt to construct collective meaning from their shared and divergent experiences (Morgan & Spanish, 1984). The discussions that emerged, centered on both the similarities and differences in the students’ experiences, helped me to uncover implicit theories that the students hold about educational resilience. Most importantly, information gained from my focus groups helped me develop questions for my individual interviews (Byers & Wilcox, 1991; Morgan & Spanish, 1984). Conducting the focus groups prior to my interviews allowed me to understand the topics in question from the perspective of the participants, to use participant language and understanding to inform my interview protocol, and to potentially discover themes or areas to probe that I had not previously considered. Consistent with Critical Race Theory, during this phase I looked for how family members, peer groups, the students’ community, and schools served as protective factors against forces that contribute to academic underachievement.
I used a semi-structured, open-ended interview protocol for my focus groups. Each group, lasting approximately one hour, was designed to uncover a general understanding of the educational experiences of the 15 Black students at UCLA. I asked questions about the institutional and sociocultural influences to their academic journeys thus far. The data gleaned from these focus groups informed my interview protocol for my individual participant interviews.

**Phase Three – Individual interviews.**

The third phase of my data collection process consisted of two semi-structured, open-ended interviews with my 15 participants. Structured interview approaches allow researchers to compare data across different individuals, times, and environments, thereby enhancing generalizability and comparability (Maxwell, 2005). A semi-structured approach, on the other hand, allows the researcher to focus on the phenomena being studied and allows each participant to create the narrative to be told rather than having it forced into a structured box (Maxwell, 2005). The semi-structured interview method was most appropriate because it allowed some flexibility for the researcher and respondent to explore responses on a deeper level, thereby making the final product a more authentic representation of the experiences of the participant.

The first of the two interviews focused on understanding the sociocultural supports and barriers to academic achievement that the participants experienced during their academic careers. During this set of interviews, I sought to understand how the participants perceived that their family members, peers, and their community contributed to, or detracted from, their academic endeavors. The literature review in chapter two demonstrated that these sociocultural factors are important aspects that can determine educational resilience.

The second of my two interviews focused on understanding the students perceived institutional supports and barriers to academic achievement. I specifically wanted to understand
how students’ experiences with teachers, counselors, and the school environment created opportunities for achievement, presented barriers to achievement, or both. As outlined in chapter two, teachers, counselors, and overall school structure can play a significant role in the educational resilience of Black students.

Data Analysis

I entered the analysis stage of the research project with a conceptual framework in mind and a set of research questions, yet I understood that my mixed methods research must be flexible and open to what emerged through the data collection process. I used a parallel mixed analysis model to analyze my data. There are three conditions that must be present in a parallel mixed analysis model: (a) both sets of data analyses must take place independently; (b) neither type of data builds on the other during the analysis phase; and (c) results are not compared until analysis of both sets of data have been completed (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004; Yin, 2006).

Quantitative analysis.

The survey data was entered into Excel and imported into SPSS 20 for analysis. In my findings chapter I report descriptive data for categorical variables including: year student enrolled at UCLA, gender, parent marital status, parent education level, and household income. Based upon the data collected from the surveys I created new variables for mother education level, father education level, and household income. Mother and father education level were modified to report whether or not each parent is a college graduate, and household income was changed to income $40,000 or less and $40,001 and more. The modified variables facilitated data analysis across students.

I created scale variables based upon the 12 external assets and 2 internal assets measured in my survey. I also created aggregate variables that combine the four school scale variables,
three home variables, three community variables, two peer variables, and two internal asset variables. Once the new scale variables were created I ran independent samples t-tests to compare the UCLA sample with the statewide sample of Black students to compare their mean scores on all scale variables.

My next step was to run several linear regression models where the internal asset (goals/aspiration and self-efficacy) was my dependent variable. In the first step, I ran each of the external assets as the independent variable in a model by itself. This allowed me to determine the significance of each scale variable in predicting internal resilience without its’ contribution being impacted by the inclusion of other variables. In the next step, I employed a block entry model to enter all external assets as independent variables to see to what degree they can predict variability in internal resilience (my dependent variable). This process allowed me to determine to what extent sociocultural and institutional variables together predict variance in the internal assets.

**Qualitative analysis.**

Transcribed interviews were coded, where “code” is defined as a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns an essence-capturing or summative attribute to a part of the transcription (Saldana, 2009). Codes were inductively developed throughout the analysis process. Through this method, analysis can be used to inform and direct the next set of interviews and enables the researcher to identify all relevant aspects of the topic immediately (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). As patterns within the data emerge from individual participants, and between participants, those data were interpreted and analyzed immediately. It is through the constant comparison of events and actions among and between the various participants that concepts are identified and categories and themes can be formed (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).
I employed three types of coding, namely, open, axial, and selective (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Merriam, 2009). Open coding takes place at the beginning of data analysis and is the process by which events, actions, and interactions are compared with each other (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). During this phase events are grouped together to create categories and subcategories. This process of grouping the data by similarities after careful comparison and analysis enables the researcher to avoid their own biases and to focus more strictly on what the data say (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The second phase of coding, axial coding, takes place as the relationships between categories and subcategories are evaluated against the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Finally, during the selective coding phase, all categories that emerged were unified around a “core” or central category (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Merriam, 2009).

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) warn that in qualitative research convergent themes do not always emerge, and the dissonance and divergence of the various stories become the story itself. I approached my research knowing that my anticipated themes regarding resilience, sociocultural support, sociocultural barriers, institutional support, and institutional barriers may not in fact emerge as critical themes or that there may not be a unifying story offered by my research participants.

Throughout all phases of the data analysis process I used “in vivo” coding because it is a method of verbatim coding that honors the participant’s voice (Saldana, 2009). Participants also had the opportunity to read through the transcripts, validate their accuracy, and add clarity or more detail to any responses. No participants made any additions or corrections to the transcripts. This part of the data analysis process enhances validity by allowing participants to view transcripts, themes, and case analysis for review, clarity, and confirmation (Creswell, 2009). No participants made any additions or corrections to the transcripts.
**Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Study**

According to Maxwell (2005), “validity is a goal rather than a product; it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted” (p. 205). A research project’s validity can be strengthened contingent upon the researcher’s objectivity, the research methods used for data collection, and the quality and comprehensiveness of data analysis and interpretation. There were two major threats to validity that I addressed in my study.

**Internal validity (bias and selection).**

Selecting participants or including only the data that support my theoretical framework could compromise my study’s credibility by introducing researcher “bias” to my project. To address potential researcher bias in both the quantitative and qualitative components of my study, I detailed, prior to my study, the purposeful sampling criteria used for selecting participants with an explanation for why I selected the sample. Through my literature review, I also explicitly discussed my theoretical framework for the study. I explained the four theories that guided my thinking about the achievement gap, but I also presented the counter-arguments that researchers have made about these theories. By giving space to opposing viewpoints, I let the reader know that there are alternate views and I also forced myself to confront and defend the theories that I chose. Ultimately the theoretical framework that I have chosen guided my data collection and I linked my interview protocols to my guiding theories.

The most important way that a researcher can rule out the possibility of misinterpreting findings, ensure that they truly understand the perspectives that participants have of their own experiences, and verify that their own biases have not entered into the data analysis process is through member checks (Maxwell, 2005). Consistent with critical race methodology, participants are co-creators of their own stories. They were asked to read through transcripts of
their interviews, verify and clarify that the data gathered was accurate, and review the emergent categories and themes that resulted from their interviews.

**Internal validity (reactivity).**

“Reactivity” could also be an issue if I exerted undue influence on the students who agreed to participate in my study or if participants chose to respond to questions in a manner that they believed would strengthen my study, even if those responses do not reflect reality. My experience with Black students at UCLA tells me that they are aware of their underrepresentation at this prestigious university and have some ideas about why more Black students do not attend the school. As such, during our interviews, they may have been more inclined to give answers that reflect popular discourse rather than responses that reflected their own experiences. To account for potential reactivity issues, I framed my research for the students as an opportunity for them to share their authentic educational histories, rather than as an attempt to understand barriers or supports to academic achievement for Black students. By framing my research from the perspective of simply providing a forum for resilient Black students to tell their stories, I took away the incentive for them to tell stories that are not truly their own. I did not highlight that I was also seeking to understand the institutional and sociocultural barriers and supports to educational attainment because I wanted those themes to emerge rather than for them to feel that they have to create stories that fit with my topic.

**External validity (generalizability)**

Generalizability for a qualitative study such as this that is built on the stories of 30 focus group and interview participants is challenging. The incorporation of survey data that includes 104 UCLA students and a comparison group of California high school students will increase my
ability to generalize my findings. Empirical data coupled with the personal stories of Black students explaining their unique experiences will give this study both depth and breadth.

**Ethical Issues**

Research ethics are an imperative for a study’s reliability and validity (Merriam, 2009). In many research studies, ethical dilemmas tend to arise related to data collection and presentation. For instance, in-depth interviews like those that I used in this study may make respondents feel as if their privacy has been violated or may cause embarrassment based upon the topics covered. Similarly, survey research can potentially threaten a respondent’s privacy if the researcher does not take steps to keep responses confidential. When reporting findings, individuals may feel that their identity was compromised and that may cause them discomfort. Finally, the researcher’s ethics can compromise a study. The researcher needs to have the requisite amount of intellectual acumen, professional integrity, and methodological competence.

All participants were voluntary and prior to participation they received an “informed consent form” that detailed their rights as participants. They were informed that they could end their involvement with the study at any time and that they have the chance to provide feedback throughout the data collection, analysis, and dissemination process. The students were also informed that their names would be changed to pseudonyms to protect their anonymity and all transcripts and recorded files would be securely stored in a locked file cabinet at my home. As a doctoral student in UCLA’s Educational Leadership Program, I have demonstrated the required intellectual capacity, integrity and methodological competence to conduct a study of this nature.

**Summary**

In this chapter I discussed the mixed methods research design and methods that I will use for my study. I detailed my data collection and data analysis methods, the justification for my
site selection and participant sample, and how I will address potential threats to credibility, validity, and ethical issues.
This chapter presents the findings from the survey data that I collected from 104 Black UCLA students who entered UCLA directly from high school, and comparison data from a statewide dataset of Black students who completed the *California Healthy Kids Survey-Resilience Module*. The surveys allowed me to compare the group of highly educationally resilient Black students attending UCLA to a group of approximately 16,000 Black students who completed the same survey throughout the state of California. Chapter two presented the theoretical framework that I used as a lens to analyze Black student achievement and the survey design reflected this framework. My research questions asked:

1. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the institutional influences that they encountered in their pursuits of higher education?

2. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the sociocultural influences that they encountered in their pursuits of higher education?

3. Are there factors beyond the sociocultural or institutional influences that facilitated educational resilience in Black students?

4. To what extent do sociocultural and institutional influences predict educational resilience?

5. Do the sociocultural and institutional influences differ between Black UCLA students and California Black high school graduates-at-large?

The current chapter looks closely at the survey data to draw comparisons between the Black UCLA students and other Black California students.

**Demographic Data of Sample**

A total sample of 104 Black UCLA students completed a modified version of the *California Healthy Kids Survey-Resilience Module*. In order to compare the group of UCLA students to a statewide dataset, I changed the language of the survey questions administered to
the undergraduates to the past tense. In that way, Black UCLA students could respond to questions about their high school experiences. Each year, approximately 600,000 California high school students take this survey that measures protective factors for middle and high school students (ie. school connectedness, home relationships, and community participation). Of the 600,000 students who took the survey throughout California, I am using data from 16,627 Black 11th graders. I eliminated middle school students and 9th grade students from my analysis because neither can respond to questions related to their high school experience. I also eliminated non-Black respondents so that I could compare Black UCLA students to other Black students statewide. The statewide sample includes student responses representing 56 counties and 341 school districts throughout California. This group is an ideal comparison group to the educationally resilient UCLA group because it represents the broad spectrum of Black students in the state.

The UCLA sample was comprised primarily of students 20 years of age or younger (73%) who held sophomore standing or lower (55%). The majority of the sample was female (64%) and most respondents attended public, non-charter schools (76%). A total of 66% of the students came from single-parent households, 54% were first-generation college-goers, and came from families whose household income was $40,000 or lower (51%). See Table 5 for the demographic breakdown of survey respondents.

Table 5: Characteristics of Black UCLA student survey respondents

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<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Public HS</th>
<th>Private/Charter HS</th>
<th>Family Income &lt; 40k</th>
<th>Single-Parent Home</th>
<th>1st gen. college</th>
<th>Under Classmen</th>
<th>Upper Classmen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

Utilizing SPSS 20 software, descriptive statistics were run on my survey respondents. Following this process, I conducted independent samples t-tests to assess whether there were significant differences between my group of highly educationally resilient Black UCLA students and the statewide sample. Finally I ran a regression model using all of the external assets (school factors, home factors, peer factors, community factors) as independent variables to see to what extent they can predict my internal resilience assets (goals/aspirations and self-efficacy).

Primary Quantitative Findings

Data from the surveys illuminated factors that contributed to the resilience of Black UCLA students. The way that educationally resilient Black students engaged with the schooling structure differed significantly from the manner in which the statewide set engaged with and experienced their schools. The group of Black UCLA students had significantly more positive experiences with school. It should be noted that the educationally resilient students did not necessarily go to schools that one would expect to foster resilience in students. Their schools were mostly public schools in urban areas. Yet, these students were able to navigate a challenging educational system and extract what they needed to be successful in school.

Second, I found that together, the sociocultural and institutional variables can in fact explain a large percentage of the variability in resilience for Black students. This has broad implications because as we strengthen the sociocultural and institutional assets around “at-risk” students, we can increase their likelihood of being educationally resilient.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the findings from my research in detail. I will begin by presenting the t-test analysis followed by the regression analysis.

**Finding One:** Educationally resilient Black students were significantly more likely to have positive school experiences than their Black peers throughout the state.
A total of 17 independent samples t-tests were conducted to assess whether there were significant differences between the group of Black UCLA students and the statewide sample of Black students. A Bonferroni adjustment was used to control for alpha error inflation for tests run among the four domains of the instrument (Family, Peers, Community, School). P-values of 0.01 were used to determine statistical significance for the school, home, and community scales. A p-value of 0.02 was used to determine statistical significance for peer variables. Prior to data analysis, statistical assumptions underlying the independent samples t-test were assessed. Assumptions for normality, equal variance, and independent sampling were met. All analyses were conducted using complete cases only.

Independent samples t-tests showed that subscales measuring “Home High Expectations,” “Peer Caring Relationships,” “Community Meaningful Participation,” “School Connectedness,” “School Caring Relationships,” “School High Expectations,” and “School Meaningful Participation” were statistically significant. For details, see Table 6 below. Additionally, the meta-scale “Aggregate School Variables,” which is a combination of the “School Caring Relationships,” “School High Expectations,” and “School Meaningful Participation” was statistically significant. To better understand the strength of the relationship between the mean scores of the two groups, I calculated the Cohen’s d. Cohen’s d measures the effect size, or strength of relationship, between two variables (Cohen, 1988). According to Cohen (1988) a

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15 See Table 6 for the full list of scale variables measured

16 The Bonferroni adjustment is a method used to counteract the problem of multiple comparisons when several statistical tests are performed simultaneously. It is a method to maintain the familywise error rate by testing each hypothesis at a statistical significance rate of 1/n times what it would be if only one hypothesis were tested where n is the number of tests conducted.

17 See Appendix E for a list of variables, means, standard deviations, and significance for each individual item that comprises each sub-scale.
d=0.2 can be considered a small effect, a d=0.5 can be considered a medium effect, and a d=0.8 and greater should be considered a large effect. Cohen’s d is calculated by taking the difference in mean between the two groups and dividing by the standard deviation:

Cohen’s d = \frac{(x_1-x_2)}{s}. The effect sizes computed for the School sub-scales and for “Community Meaningful Participation” were all in the moderate to strong range. Cohen’s d computed for all other sub-scales were found to be weak.

According to the survey data, the highly educationally resilient Black UCLA students had significantly more positive experiences with their schools than their Black peers statewide. They were more likely to feel connected to their schools (happy at school, treated fairly, part of school) and to report having experienced caring relationships from adults at school (teacher who cares, teacher who listened). They were also significantly more likely to have adults in school that held them to high expectations (teachers wanted me to do my best, teachers believed I would succeed) and to have had meaningful participation in their schools (at school did interesting activities, at school did things that made a difference). The Black UCLA students were also more likely to be internally resilient, meaning they had significantly higher goals/aspirations and self-efficacy scores than their statewide peers with a moderate level effect size of 0.4. The significant differences found in “Home High Expectations” and “Peer Caring Relationships” had low effect sizes, which indicates that the magnitude of difference between the two groups is in fact small. Table 6 below highlights the mean scores and effect sizes of all scale variables.

The mean scores on most of the variables measured by the survey did not show statistical difference between the two groups. Both the UCLA students and the statewide group were

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18 Scores on the survey were measured on a 4-point Likert scale anchored by 1=not true and 4=very true. The “School Connected” sub-scale items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.
similar in their scores for the “Aggregate Home Variables,” “Aggregate Peer Variables,” and “Aggregate Community Variables” (see Table 6). These data suggest that the sociocultural differences between the two groups are not statistically different.

**Finding Two: Variation in Educational resilience assets can be predicted by the sociocultural and institutional influences in a Black student’s life.**

Family, peer, community, and school influences can all work together to foster resiliency in students (Benard, 1991). I used regression analysis to determine the contribution that each of the external asset subscale categories (independent variables) made to the internal asset variable (dependent variable)\(^1\). Data from both the statewide data set and UCLA set were included in the regression analysis (n=4073). Before data analysis, the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were assessed using residual scatter plots. The assumption of linearity was met, as the scatter plot revealed no curvilinear shape. The assumption of homoscedasticity was also met as the residuals remained constant on the regression line. Lastly, the assumption of normality was also met as the scatter plot showed that there was a pile up of residuals in the center of the plot and few at the tails that were symmetrical from the center (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Variables were entered into the regression model using the block entry method. All variables were entered simultaneously in the first step because neither the literature nor my theoretical framework asserts that any of the variables are more important to fostering resilience than the others. Rather, all of the external assets have been found to be protective factors for Black students that buffer them against risk and facilitate resiliency.

## Table 6: Independent Samples T-test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Variable</th>
<th>Group (n)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Caring Relationships</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.17 (0.90)</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>4342</td>
<td>0.645</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (4240)</td>
<td>3.13 (0.98)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home High Expectations</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.75 (0.50)</td>
<td>-4.40</td>
<td>116.49</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (4258)</td>
<td>3.52 (0.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Meaningful Participation</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>2.83 (0.87)</td>
<td>-0.529</td>
<td>109.61</td>
<td>0.600</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2.79 (0.99)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate Home Variables</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.25 (0.62)</td>
<td>-1.797</td>
<td>111.84</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<td>3.14 (0.81)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Caring Relationships</td>
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<td>3.52 (0.66)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Statewide (4372)</td>
<td>3.35 (0.91)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer High Expectations</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.15 (0.68)</td>
<td>-1.47</td>
<td>4398</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (4296)</td>
<td>3.03 (0.84)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate Peer Variables</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.34 (0.56)</td>
<td>-2.16</td>
<td>4512</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Statewide (4410)</td>
<td>3.20 (0.68)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Caring Relationships</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.27 (0.88)</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>15032</td>
<td>0.575</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (14930)</td>
<td>3.32 (0.91)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community High Expectations</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.31 (0.92)</td>
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<td>0.374</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<td>Statewide (14937)</td>
<td>3.23 (0.94)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Meaningful Participation</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.37 (0.71)</td>
<td>-5.675</td>
<td>105.58</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (15003)</td>
<td>2.97 (0.94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate Community Variables</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.31 (0.73)</td>
<td>-1.89</td>
<td>15176</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (15074)</td>
<td>3.17 (0.78)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Connectedness</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.77 (0.83)</td>
<td>-5.89</td>
<td>15285</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (15183)</td>
<td>3.23 (0.93)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Caring Relationships</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.64 (0.51)</td>
<td>-14.89</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (14972)</td>
<td>2.88 (0.85)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School High Expectations</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.73 (0.50)</td>
<td>-14.02</td>
<td>107.39</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (14968)</td>
<td>3.04 (0.86)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Meaningful Participation</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.24 (0.74)</td>
<td>-10.21</td>
<td>15096</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (14994)</td>
<td>2.33 (0.90)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate School Variables</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.54 (0.43)</td>
<td>-18.48</td>
<td>107.13</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statewide (15141)</td>
<td>2.75 (0.73)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate Internal Resiliency (Goals &amp; Self-Efficacy)</td>
<td>UCLA (104)</td>
<td>3.78 (0.39)</td>
<td>-5.89</td>
<td>120.38</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 displays the unadjusted regression coefficients, $R^2$ for each independently regressed variable, adjusted regression coefficients, partial correlations, change in $R$ for the overall model, adjusted $R^2$ for the model, and F change statistic. The unadjusted regression coefficient is the coefficient when the individual independent variable is regressed on the dependent variable in a model with no other variables. This information is important because it gives a sense of the relationship between that one independent variable and the dependent variable without the inclusion of other variables. The adjusted $B$ is the regression coefficient for the entire model, and the partial correlation is the unique contribution of the variable to the overall $R^2$ for the model.

**Table 7: Multivariate Linear Regression Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unadjusted B</th>
<th>$R^2$ (unadjusted B)</th>
<th>Adjusted B</th>
<th>Partial Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Caring Relationships</td>
<td>0.310***</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>-0.041**</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home High Expectations</td>
<td>0.515***</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>0.347***</td>
<td>0.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Meaningful Participation</td>
<td>0.278***</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.039***</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Caring Relationships</td>
<td>0.371***</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0.146***</td>
<td>0.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer High Expectations</td>
<td>0.342***</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.095***</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Caring Relationships</td>
<td>0.237***</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.065**</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community High Expectations</td>
<td>0.229***</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>-0.049*</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Meaningful</td>
<td>0.216***</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.046***</td>
<td>0.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Caring Relationships</td>
<td>0.246***</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School High Expectations</td>
<td>0.294***</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.069***</td>
<td>0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Meaningful Participation</td>
<td>0.171***</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Connectedness</td>
<td>0.190***</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group (UCLA or statewide)</td>
<td>0.231***</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Change Statistic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>235.776</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The individual slopes (unadjusted B) of each predictor were tested to see if they differed significantly from zero. The coefficients in the table show that all independent variables individually were statistically different from zero (p<.001) meaning that all of the variables could significantly predict internal resilience assets for Black students when they appear as the sole variable in the model. Home High Expectations ($R^2 = .351$) and Peer High Expectations ($R^2 = .231$) held the most predictive value, while the Community variables, School Caring Relationship, School Meaningful Participation, and School Connectedness held the least predictive value among the external resilience assets. Though significant, the grouping variable (UCLA group or statewide), held very little predictive value ($R^2 = .002$).

When all variables were included in a model together, the Home, Peer, and Community sub-scale variables were all significant. Interestingly, the School variables, with the exception of School High Expectations, did not contribute significantly to the model. For the model, Multiple R was significantly different from zero, meaning that we can significantly predict internal resilience assets from the external resilience assets, Multiple $R = 0.656$, Multiple $R^2 = 0.430$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.428$, Fchange (13, 4059) = 235.776, p<0.001. Using this model, we can predict 43% of the variance in resilience based on the external factors that act as buffers or protective factors for students.

The t-test and regression data provide us some interesting insight into resilience for Black students. Comparisons between the two groups of students clearly show that schooling experiences differ greatly for these groups of students. The educationally resilient students, while in high school, had significantly more caring relationships with adults, were held to higher
expectations, were engaged more fully in the school environment, and were more connected to their schools than their peers throughout the state. The resilient students were also significantly more likely to be held to high expectations at home from their parents or caregivers, and they reported more meaningful participation in their communities as well.

Regression analysis shows that school variables, while statistically significant, are less predictive than sociocultural variables. When all of the independent variables are entered into a model together, Home High Expectations and Peer Caring Relationships contribute the most to explaining variance in internal resilience assets. Evidently both sociocultural and institutional factors are essential elements in helping us to understand educational resilience for Black students.

Summary

This chapter detailed the major findings from my quantitative data analysis. According to the surveys, educationally resilient students had significantly more positive experiences in school than their peers. I also found evidence that variation in educational resilience can be predicted by sociocultural and institutional influences. The following chapter details the results of the focus groups and interviews conducted with Black UCLA undergraduates.
Chapter Five
Qualitative Findings

This chapter presents qualitative data from two focus groups with 15 Black UCLA students and two in-depth individual interviews with 15 additional students. The surveys, focus groups, and interviews were all designed to understand the sociocultural and institutional factors that influenced educational resilience. Resilience theory frames the lens through which I have analyzed Black student achievement. Survey data and interview responses allowed me to investigate student experiences in light of both the sociocultural and institutional influences on their education. Together, the qualitative and quantitative data contribute both depth and breadth to the discussion of the resilience of Black students. My research questions asked:

1. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the institutional influences that they encountered in their pursuit of higher education?

2. What do educationally resilient Black students perceive to be the sociocultural influences that they encountered in their pursuit of higher education?

3. Are there factors beyond the sociocultural or institutional influences that facilitated educational resilience in Black students?

4. To what extent do sociocultural and institutional influences predict educational resilience?

5. Do the sociocultural and institutional influences differ between Black UCLA students and California Black high school graduates-at-large?

The current chapter highlights common themes among the respondents that emerged based on the interviews and focus groups.

Demographic Data of Qualitative Sample

The 104 survey respondents were invited to participate in the focus groups or interviews. Based upon responses to email inquiries and schedule availability, a total of 30 Black UCLA undergraduates participated in the focus groups and interviews for my study. Table 8 details
demographic information for each focus group participant. In total, 66% of the focus group was female, and 80% of the group attended public, non-charter high schools. 60% of the focus group participants were from single-parent homes, more than half (53%) were first-generation college-goers, and 33% came from families with household incomes below $40,000 annually. Seven of the participants attended high school in the greater Los Angeles area. Of the 15 focus group participants, seven were underclassmen (47%) and eight were upperclassmen (53%).

Table 8: Pseudonym and Demographic Information for Focus Group Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Public HS</th>
<th>Priv/Charter HS</th>
<th>HS City</th>
<th>Family Income &lt; 40k</th>
<th>Single-Parent Home</th>
<th>1st gen. college</th>
<th>Class Standing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Wilmington, CA</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Redlands, CA</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td>Pasadena, CA</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>Junior</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Corona, CA</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Senior</td>
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<tr>
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Table 9 details the pertinent demographic information for each interview participant. Eight males (53%) and seven females (47%) from a mix of public, non-charter high schools (66%) and private and charter high schools (33%) participated in the interviews. Eleven of the participants attended high school in the greater Los Angeles area. Ten of the 15 participants came from households earning less than $40,000 in annual income (66%), nine were from single-parent homes (60%), and eight were first-generation college-goers (53%). Of the 15 focus group participants, seven were underclassmen (47%) and eight were upperclassmen (53%).
Table 9: Pseudonym and Demographic Information for Interview Participants

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Taken together, 43% of the qualitative participants were male and 73% attended public high schools. Half of the total participants came from families earning annual income less than $40,000, 60% came from single-parent homes, 53% were first-generation college-going, and 47% were underclassmen. Such a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds allowed me to learn from the experiences of a diverse pool of Black students.

**Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures**

Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I then read through the transcripts multiple times and assigned color-coded themes that reflected my theoretical framework. The overarching themes were “Family,” “Peers,” “Community,” “School,” and “Resistance.” Two independent research partners also read through the transcripts and coded the focus groups using these same themes. Together we discussed why we assigned various quotes to each theme so that we could develop agreement and consistency in our coding process. Studies on inter-rater reliability have found that multiple analysts do demonstrate a degree of
consensus in theme identification, though they may call the themes by different names (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997). Once we coded the focus groups, we worked together to develop common terms that we used throughout the coding process.

Using the themes that emerged from the focus groups, the research team coded the 15 individual interviews. While the focus group themes were a starting point, new themes emerged from the interviews that were not apparent from the focus groups. Within each theme, sub-themes also emerged. The sub-themes added clarity and depth to the analysis phase. To illuminate my findings, I relied on quotes from my study participants. I have maintained the integrity of their responses as much as possible and have only removed words like “um” that impact clarity.

**Primary Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative analysis of interview and focus group responses showed that Black families were major contributors to the resilience of the UCLA group. They held high expectations of their students, motivated them, and served as role models for the students to follow.

Interview data show that the peer group was another important facet of the student’s lives that aided in their academic achievement. I found that shared aspirations among peer groups led to high academic outcomes for the study participants. Their shared goals gave the students a common cause to rally around. They competed for grades and supported each other’s efforts to do well in school.

The data also show that community members and programs run by universities and either community- or faith-based organizations, provided students with important support and guidance. As a result of the relationships formed with role models or through participation in programs,
students were exposed to opportunities and information that helped to push them towards their academic goals. Student participants benefited by learning critical college-prep information, by gaining access to scholarships and other resources, and by forging relationships with universities and professors through residential programs and research projects.

Students described their own experiences with their schools as positive. Even when students characterized their schools as low-performing, they expressed that their own interactions with teachers and counselors helped them to achieve. According to the students, their school personnel held them accountable for their academic performance, pushed them to excel, and provided the requisite support for them to reach their academic potential.

Finally, the data show that for several students, the negative societal, institutional, and familial conditions that they grew up in were a motivating force, rather than a hindrance. They actively resisted negative influences and the expected negative outcomes that generally follow at-risk students and they put pressure on the system to change.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the findings from my research in detail, relying heavily on the voices of my interview and focus group participants. The chapter is organized around the themes and sub-themes that emerged.

**Finding Three: Families foster educational resilience by setting high academic expectations, motivating students, being actively involved, and by setting an example for students to follow.**

The focus groups and interviews of the students in this study revealed the important role that family played in developing academic resiliency in this group of Black UCLA students. The students’ families set academic expectations for them, held them accountable for their performance and in many cases were the source of role models for the students to emulate.
Student’s families were also a source of motivation for many of the participants and established a culture of achievement in a variety of ways.

**Academic expectations and accountability.**

Fourteen of 15 interviewees and seven of 15 focus group participants identified academic expectations and high standards that their parents established for them as critical to their academic achievement. These expectations were communicated to the students in various ways. In many cases, parents’ expectations were explicitly stated. When recalling her earliest memories related to college-going, Crystal C. recounted:

“I don’t remember how old I was when my mom was like ‘You’re going to college.’ She was washing dishes and I walked into the room and she was like ‘You know you’re going to college right?’ And I was like, ‘okay mom’ and I went and got something to eat and walked out. It’s kind of just always been like [that] . . . I know my little sister said she [doesn’t] want to go to college. I said, ‘No, there’s no choice. Not in this family.’”

Crystal’s recollection of the importance placed on college from an early age is not uncommon among the study participants. Charles E. recalled:

“[My mother] literally would say to me that once you get your high school degree, so what? You need to get your bachelor’s. Once I was working on my bachelor’s she was like, so what, you need to be thinking about your graduate degree . . . At 6th grade graduation she was like, ‘This is not really anything, high school is important.’ She would say it in a nice way, like ‘Yeah good job, but this is not it.’ Even at my high school [graduation] dinner she was like ‘Good job, but now you’re going to UCLA.’”

Consistent among most of the interviewees was the feeling that, from a very young age, they felt as if they did not have a choice about whether or not they were going to attend college after high school graduation. While 14 of 15 interviewees remembered the messages that they received about college from a positive standpoint, two of the focus group participants pointed to negative feedback that they would receive for lack of academic achievement. Walter E. explained:

“If I didn’t go to college I would be looked at as a failure by my parents. I have a lot of older cousins that excelled. They were valedictorians. I have some cousins that didn’t go to college and some that did. My parents were like, ‘Be like the ones that went to college,
not the ones that didn’t.’ My parents worked hard and I would feel like I’m failing them as well as myself if I didn’t go to college.”

Destiny A. described a conversation between her family members where they would brag about the achievements of their children. She said that, “family members would [say] ‘Oh, my [child] just went to USC’ or ‘my daughter just finished her bachelor’s in three years.’ It kind of sets the bar . . . and if you don’t exceed it then it’s like whatever and they don’t really talk about it.” The messages that parents gave to their children about going to college and their expectations were a motivating force for many of these resilient students.

Academic expectations were not always directly stated or communicated verbally. Sometimes the expectations were conveyed through the college-going environment that was established at home or the academic accountability that students were held to. Breana L. discussed how college was ever present in her life. She said:

“It was always expected of me to go to college. I never had a choice. You know, like after you graduate high school you’re going to … work at a restaurant? It was never like that. It was always ‘You gotta go to college’ … I did well in high school because there was always that expectation of me that I had to go to college. And in order to go to college I had to do well in my classes.”

The expectations that Breana’s parents set for her about attending college were positively associated with her academic achievement in high school. She understood that in order to achieve the goals set for her, her academic performance was essential. Clinton O. had a similar experience. He said:

“In my family there was a certain standard that we had to meet. It was never like I thought I wasn’t going to college. It was never like maybe I’m not going to college or maybe I’m going to a community college. It was always [I’m] going to a four-year university. That was always the standard. We always knew that education was a priority no matter what.”

Charles E. discussed how his parents communicated the importance of education to him. He said:
“My home was geared towards academic success. There was no room for error. I didn’t miss school. I wasn’t the type to miss school. I woke up every day to go to school. They [parents] forced me to go to school every day. That wasn’t an option.”

These families created an environment where academic achievement and college preparation was the norm. Through both explicit verbal conversations and through the expectations established in the home, the students understood that four-year institutions were in their future and they did the requisite work to achieve their goals.

Along with establishing a college-going atmosphere and college goals for their children, the parents held their children accountable for their academic performance. Savant D. recalled, “I had to graduate with an above 4.0 GPA with no drugs or alcohol in my system … My dad told me, ‘I’m not supporting any losers … At 18 if you’re not in college you’re out of this house.’” While this message may seem harsh, it demonstrates the preeminence placed on education in the household. Walter E. spoke of consequences for not getting good grades, and Ava Y. said, “I couldn’t get a ‘B.’ There was no such thing as getting ‘B’s’ in my house.” For many of the students, they were both indoctrinated with an expectation that they would attend college and they were also held accountable to take the steps to make college a reality.

The survey data support the assertion that these students made about their parents’ academic expectations. On a 4-point scale, their average score on the “Home High Expectations” sub-scale was statistically different than the score for the statewide sample. This indicates that these students believed that their parents held them to higher expectations than the statewide sample believed their parents held them to. Particularly telling is the difference in responses to the question “My parents believed I would be a success.” Not only was the difference in response statistically significant, but the effect size of 0.4 shows that the difference is a moderate
one. Apparently, the resilient students knew that their parents believed that they would be a success to a greater degree than their peers throughout the state.

**Family as motivation.**

For nine of the interviewees, family was a key motivating factor for their own educational pursuits. Seven students discussed how challenging home situations pushed them to excel in school so that they could create better lives for themselves and/or their families. Alistair S. was a student who spent some time in the foster care system, witnessed domestic abuse at home and violence in his neighborhood. When asked why those challenges did not derail him as they would so many other students, he said:

“I was at a point in my life that I would look at myself as to where I would be in the next five to ten years. If not going to school I would be at some fast food joint just working or possibly in jail because I was hanging out with some people who was in the wrong crowd, or [I would be] in the military somewhere. I realized that I didn’t want to see myself in either of those spaces. It wasn’t really my decision. I wasn’t just thinking for just myself, I had seven people on my back. Someone needed to take that chance to give my family hope and I took it upon myself to do that.”

Alisha W. is another foster care student. Family members and foster parents physically and sexually abused her for many years. Between the ages of eight and 18 she lived in 36 foster homes and attended 26 different schools. In spite of all of this, she graduated near the top of her class and was able to enroll in UCLA directly from high school. She said:

School became my outlet … I hated being at my foster homes. I hated being in foster care. I would stay after school. I would come to school early. I was the typical nerd. School was like my escape. For me education has always been my key passion or whatever. I was always in school … I knew as I got older that [education] was the only consistent thing in my life. Parents weren’t consistent; people coming in and out of my life weren’t consistent. I got separated from my twin brother so the love and affection from my twin brother wasn’t consistent. Having parents wasn’t consistent. The only thing that was consistent was having education. I think that almost by default I became so invested in education. It was the only thing that I knew couldn’t fail me. It was up to me to get my own education. (Alisha W.)
Though different from Alistair in that she was not seeking to elevate her family, Alisha and Alistair shared a belief that education could be the mechanism by which they could escape the hardships that they endured.

Alistair and Alisha were not the only students who were motivated to achieve because of their family experiences. Melissa F. spoke of how difficult it was to watch her mother “stretch a dollar a million ways” and how education was her means for financial security. She decided that she would “have to live better than this [because] it’s depressing.” Aaron S. disclosed:

“I was living with my grandmother and I really didn’t like our situation. I didn’t like that she had to struggle to put food on the table and to pay rent and all that. So I just knew that I had to do something to have a better life for myself and for her. So that motivation to just try to do better through my education.”

Desperation to alter their life situations was not the only source of motivation that these students received from their families. Gratitude was also a significant motivator. Jazlyn O. intimated that her mother was one of her biggest influences to achieve. According to Jazlyn:

“[My mother] really didn’t have an education [so] I just wanted to take advantage of the opportunities given to me because she really didn’t have any. I guess that was my main motivation. I just wanted to do it for myself and her.”

Bryce M. expressed a similar sentiment. He said:

“My dad worked two jobs and basically did all that he could to provide for us. My mom worked one job and basically worked it until she just messed up her hand and couldn’t do it anymore. All the hard work set a good example for me to try to repay them. I’ve tried to work nearly as hard as they have even though I don’t think it’s possible. I try to at least get close.”

For this group of highly educationally resilient students, both gratitude and life challenge were sources of inspiration and motivation.

*Family involvement.*

Parents and caregivers became involved in the academic lives of these students in a variety of ways. Twelve of the 15 interview participants spoke of how parental involvement
impacted their educational success. Six students had parents who helped them with homework and school projects and five students discussed how their parents advocated on their behalf at school. Five students focused on the life lessons that their parents imparted that give them guidance and direction for their educational lives and beyond. Regardless of the manner in which parents and caregivers involved themselves with their children’s academics, it was apparent that some type of meaningful parental participation and involvement was important for developing Black student resilience.

When Dante F. discussed his mother’s involvement in his academics, he said:

“My mom used to read my papers when I finished them. She would check the grammatical errors or to make sure it sounded right. She usually would sit with me and help me come up with a full outline for my paper. That was the biggest thing I would say my mom was mostly there with me everyday making sure I understood what I was doing as far as English and stuff goes.”

The type of support that Dante received from his mother was common among the group. Princeton, Clinton, Charles, Jordyn, and Breana all spoke about how their parents or siblings helped them with various activities including homework, school projects, college applications, and scholarship applications. These students felt supported by their families because of the active participation in their education.

While direct involvement in schoolwork may be an important role for family members, they can be active in a student’s life without helping with homework or projects. At times, young people benefit from having an adult who will advocate on their behalf and look out for their best interests. When Savant D. enrolled in a predominately White and Asian school in the suburbs, her mother was disappointed to learn that she was placed in “average” classes. Savant said:

“She went down [to the school] and the principal was like ‘Oh she doesn’t qualify’ and [my mom] was like ‘Look at her file’ and he was like ‘I know she doesn’t qualify.’ And
she was like ‘Look at her file’ and he was like ‘oh maybe it was an error or something like that.’ And so I got placed in the advanced courses. She was always like that. She never took no for an answer … If I didn’t have my mom and dad I probably wouldn’t be where I am today … If your parents aren’t involved, [education] would be a much more difficult process to get through.”

Other students’ parents worked on their children’s behalf by moving them to schools that they thought would better prepare them for the university. Focus group participant Destiny A. was moved out of the public schools in Corona into a private school because her mother “thought that a private school would help [her] get into a better university than the public schools that were available.” Deron J. was also transferred to a private school from a public school for what his mother thought would be a better opportunity for educational growth. He said that, “going to that school, because it was better than the public school [he attended], started [his] interest in doing well in school.” These parents found ways to ensure that their children had every opportunity for success. They made sure that school administrators placed them in the appropriate courses, and when need be, they moved them to schools that they thought would give their children the best possible chance to succeed.

The final way that families motivated these students was through the life lessons that the parents and caregivers taught them. When asked what the most important lesson that he learned from his mother growing up, Dante F. said, “Not quitting. My mom like really instilled that in me. She told me don’t ever give up fighting for things you want. That just stuck with me … That just drove me and motivates me to accomplish things.” Princeton’s mother also taught him to persevere through adversity. He said, “[She] taught me to push through things. If I can’t do it now, five minutes from now maybe I can do it. If I can’t do something now, come back to it [later].” Crystal was also taught to not let obstacles get in her way. She remembers that when she was in high school her mother decided to quit her job to go back to school. She says, “And I
think that’s inspiration … She always wanted to be a medical assistant and she had six kids … and she didn’t let that stop her. And that’s telling me … I shouldn’t let anything get in my way.”

The most salient lessons learned could be applied to academics, but also to life. Ava learned the value of balance in her life. She said:

“The biggest thing [I learned] was structure and keeping a schedule … I had a set schedule every day and it was like keep busy. That mentality carried over into high school and I stayed involved in over 17 activities. It was the fact that I was balancing so much and doing so many things that I realized that that’s what college was gonna be [like]. Balancing academics with a social life with family life and other things like that.”

When asked a similar question about the most important lessons related to education that she learned, Jazlyn O. said that her mother taught her:

“To be independent, especially as a woman. You shouldn’t really have to rely on anybody … I never want to have to rely on anybody. If I do anything, I do it for myself … Just stay motivated, do what you have to do, never rely on anybody to help you but yourself.”

The lessons that Alistair learned by watching his father over the years is similar to the lesson Jazlyn’s mother taught her. When speaking of his father, he said:

“His work ethic and what he values really pushed me to be like him in a lot of ways. And like really putting family first and really doing whatever it takes. He didn’t have any education. He came from Trinidad when he was fifteen. He never really had an education other than a couple years in high school. He started high school freshmen year at age sixteen and graduated high school at twenty one and was in the military from there on. And then just worked unskilled labor from then. He instilled a lot of my values of family and hard work ethic. He definitely did that.” (Alistair S.)

Families were instrumental in shaping the lives of these students through what they said to them and the lives that they led in front of them. These resilient Black students were taught from an early age that perseverance and hard work pays dividends and that they should never give up on their dreams. These lessons remain with these students as evidenced by their own academic success.
Family as role models and path setters.

Ten of the interviewees had family members who influenced them academically by providing role models and path setters for them to follow. When asked what factors or influences led to his academic competitiveness, Wesley B. answered:

“I would say my immediate family, specifically my oldest sister. She’s been a teacher and a vice-principal at my high school. When I was young like in elementary and junior high school she would take me up there and show me students who were doing well, showing me different things about college and school. She always kept me involved. One thing that she really instilled was keep good grades so you can go anywhere you wanna go. Just basic knowledge and advice because I wanted to go to college from a youth. When I was in 6th grade I wanted to come to UCLA. She kept me on the path and showed me the path to get there. I just set a goal when I was young.”

Wesley’s sister acknowledged his goal to ultimately gain admission to UCLA and worked to develop that goal. She introduced him to other students with similar aspirations and kept him involved in activities that supported his endeavors. Crystal’s relationship with her sister who once attended her high school also proved to be beneficial. She recounted that on the first day of school her older sister had a conversation with her counselor. She said:

“’This is my little sister. You’re gonna see her because I’m gonna make sure she’s in this office talking to you’ … So I’m like maybe I’ll try it out. Maybe I’ll go talk to him when I’m bored or if I don’t have [any]body to talk to at lunch. And I started just going in there and he started knowing my face and my name and stuff like that. And it was just like, if my sister hadn’t have [taken] me in there I wouldn’t have, we wouldn’t have talked or anything like that.”

Crystal also said that it was her sister’s encouragement that made her enroll in her first AP class in 10th grade, a practice that she continued throughout high school. Her sister not only facilitated a very important relationship between Crystal and her counselor, but also set her on an academically competitive track by convincing her to enroll in Advanced Placement courses.

Some students followed directly in the footsteps of their older siblings and family members. Eight of the interview participants had parents, older siblings, or other family
members who provided a model for postsecondary achievement through their own successes.

Clinton stated that:

“All my siblings went to college. So … I never felt like I had to struggle about going to college. Everyone [friends] were all stressing out about financial aid and all these different things but I’m just like I got this already. My siblings can help me, they know what to do. They’re still in college, so it’s not a problem.”

Devinee’s older cousin’s experience with college was a motivating factor for her own college aspirations. She vividly recalls her cousin moving away to attend USC. At the time she thought that living in the dorms was “amazing” and she was impressed by how “much more mature they [cousins] were” when they came back home. Bryce’s sister’s success in college “showed [him] what was possible if [he] went beyond high school and continue[d] on with education.” These students had family members who set their academic course through direct guidance or by establishing a path that they could then follow.

Finding Four: Educationally resilient Black students had peer groups that shared their academic aspirations and ambition and these shared aspirations led to behavior that promoted academic success.

Similar to the family, peer groups were another protective force for this group of highly educationally resilient Black students. Every interview participant discussed the positive impact that their peers had on their academic lives. The manner in which peers affected education varied amongst the students, but the result was the same. Peer groups held each other to high expectations, held each other accountable for their academic performance, and supported themselves through academic assistance, motivation and encouragement.

This section is centered on the one central peer related theme that emerged after several iterations of coding the interviews and focus groups. Shared Aspirations and the various sub-themes that surfaced will be the lens through which I discuss peer groups and their influence on academic resiliency.
Peers and shared aspirations.

This group of educationally resilient Black students understands the importance that their peers played in their success. Jazlyn pointed out that:

“When you have a certain motivation or just an ideology, you kind of find people that connect and have the same ideas. When I met some of my friends, I wasn’t like ‘She’s smart, let me hang out with her.’ We automatically clicked from the conversations we thought were important … We were all kind of the same. We were all pretty ambitious. Grades have to be on point. That’s just how our friend group is. We held each other accountable.”

Alisha W. believed that it was important for her to be around peers who were academically oriented. She was able to find that group in the Law Magnet at her school. When asked to describe her closest group of peers, she said:

“When I got to high school, my circle of friends were people in the Law Magnet … This was a set of students that were high achievers and on the right path … I was centered around people who were going to the same place I wanted to go. If I didn’t have them I think I would’ve a little bit been turned in a different way.” (Alisha W.)

The importance of having friends of the same mindset was not lost on the males of the group.

Princeton said, “One of the life lessons that I learned … is who your friends are represents you. I now have friends that are progressive and better than me so I can become more like them.”

Clinton also spoke about the importance of his friends. He said:

“My friends were doing the same things I was doing, so it kept me grounded … You didn’t want to be that guy … having fun with us but then you’re not about your studies. You don’t want to be that guy hanging out with us.”

These students found both camaraderie and support with the peers that they chose and as evidenced by their comments they believe that their friends were important components of their own academic achievement and resiliency.

Shared aspirations and competition.
Competition between the UCLA students and their peers throughout their pre-college years pushed six of the focus group and interview participants to greater academic accomplishments. Beginning as early as elementary school, Royce found himself competing with his friends to be the best student. He said:

“I think looking back at elementary school I always seemed to have a friend that was also in the same relative level of intelligence … so it was like a competition thing. It was motivation for being the first one to read the first book in class or do better on a test.”

Competition also pushed Jordyn B. When she spoke of her friends in high school, she described them as “real competitive.” She said, “We always wanted to see who could apply to more schools, but other than that we’re all cool. During lunch and nutrition we’re going to hang out … but in the classroom it was like ‘No, you can’t copy my paper.’”

At times, the competition could even turn extreme. When Deron was asked to describe his friends, he shared:

“I had multiple friends that went on to Berkeley, Cornell, all these top schools. It was just a real competitive environment. We joked around if you ended up going to a community college … It was a good environment. It was also kind of a survival of the fittest. Like, do what you have to do to get good grades.”

Selah also remembered how she and her friends ridiculed each other based on their performance. She said, “It [high school] was really competitive. If you got a 97 in a class, we would be like ‘Ha! You got a 97 and I got a 98 … We all had high expectations of ourselves.” These students created such high standards for themselves that college enrollment or an “A” on an exam was not necessarily considered a success. They used competition to push each other to the highest levels of achievement.

The competition between peers extended beyond the classroom and grades. Devinee recalled taking note of the activities that her friends participated in and seeking to emulate them. She said, “If I saw someone applying for a scholarship then I wanted to apply for that scholarship.
If someone is in a particular program … I was like ‘why is he in it and I’m not?’” Devinee used her competitive nature to not only raise her own level of performance, but also the performance of her friends on the Academic Decathlon team. As captain of the team, she took notice of how the more competitive teams prepared for competition.

“We would go study with them, see how they studied … I remember always comparing my team to them saying ‘You see how those students act, that’s how we have to act’ … I would see that on the way to a meet they would ride in the car and be studying while we were driving. We would be listening to music while we were driving. So I cut out the music. No more music, no more talking, we’re gonna study. We’re gonna read … They would basically utilize every free time, every second that they had they used to study … I switched things up. We needed to be studying when they studied.”

Competition caused these students to adopt more college-preparatory behaviors like applying for scholarships, participating in extra-curricular programs, or adopting more stringent study habits.

*Shared aspirations and academic support.*

All 15 interviewees and 13 of 15 focus group participants believed that their peer groups played an important role in their academic success by establishing high academic expectations and holding each other accountable to reaching those standards. Although they were competitive, they offered each other support so that they could all reach their academic goals. It was common for them to talk about how their peer groups helped each other with assignments or studied together. Clinton attended a high school that was structured so that students could also earn their associate’s degree upon high school graduation. These students often had to stay at school into the evening hours to take their college courses. He said, “We would study together a lot. After school a lot of us had late classes at like 7 o’clock at the college. So during that 3-hour period between school and college we would just study together.” Adina also studied with her friends to ensure that they were all excelling. When she was asked whether she felt that her friends aided or hindered her academic success, she said:
“My peers were my study buddy, my good friends, my confidants … We always had study group sessions … So everything we did was together. It was never like I’m just going to go off by myself. There was always a crew. So that was an impact for me.”

Alisha and her friends were also extremely supportive of each other. She recalled:

“We tutored each other. If we were good in certain areas, like I was good at trigonometry at one point in time. I had a friend who was bad at trigonometry so I would help her with her work. I was bad with science, still to this day. She would help me with that. We would also go to after-school tutoring with our teachers and build that network which are your teachers. That was really important. We had accountability where after school we stayed after school and just hung out with each other. We just stayed and did school work or whatever. None of us wanted to go home, so it was like let’s just stay at school and do homework or figure out how we can better do stuff or whatever it may be. We kept that accountability with each other.”

This type of response was common among the participants. In fact, all 15 interviewees and seven of the 15 focus group participants referenced the academic support that they both gave and received from their peers.

When students among the peer groups found their grades slipping or were not living up to established expectations, the group was there to encourage and admonish the transgressor. Alisha W. explained:

“I felt like so many people had contributed to my life … The charge for me was to take it one step further and help other people … For me I needed to be that positive role model. If I saw someone ditching school I was like ‘Naw, come on. Let’s go. You need to get back to class.’”

Alisha described how she would also advocate on behalf of her friends with their teachers. When they received poor grades, she would go and speak with the teacher to see what the student could do to make up the grade. She believed that “so many people gave to [her] and it was [her] duty to give back and help other people.” In the case of Ava Y., she was not the one giving encouragement but instead she was the one in need of support. She described a situation where she benefited from the support of her friends:
“My senior year I experienced a couple deaths in my family, one being my grandfather. So I slacked off. I didn’t care. I was getting C’s in my AP classes and the whole band turned on me. They all just wouldn’t hang out with me … They would be like ‘You know we aren’t going out. You gotta do your homework. You gotta get your grades up … We’ve known you all these years and this is not what you’re about.’”

Through study groups and through their faith in each other, these students provided and received support that enhanced their educational resiliency and allowed them to excel.

*Managing divergent aspirations.*

Educationally resilient students were not always able to avoid relationships with students who were not on track for competitive college admissions, and in many cases they desired to maintain relationships with such students. Twelve of the focus group and interview participants discussed the challenge of maintaining relationships with peers who did not share their academic interests. The important lesson was how the resilient students managed those relationships.

Alisha remembers having to make a choice about what type of students she would associate with while she was in middle school.

“I always gravitated to the bad people, the ones who smoked weed and drank … I knew this was not the path where I should be going. I would see my friends fall off quickly, like drop out of school, get suspended, get in fights, get jumped, get shot, get killed, and like it literally took all these people to fall off to where it became just me. And where I had to focus on me. I didn’t have friends for a long time. Even to this day I don’t really associate with a lot of people because people bring me down or pull on me to where I’m not focused anymore. For me as a teenager, I got into all the stuff that teenagers did but it just wasn’t ever really my thing.”

Alisha went on to explain that by the time she entered high school she was choosing friends who were also focused on their academics just as she was. She attributed part of her success in school to that decision.

Eight of the male students chose to keep a social group of friends comprised of teammates and friends from their neighborhoods, while maintaining a separate group of friends who they could study with. Princeton attributed his ability to maintain social standing with the
more popular students and with gang members while also focusing on academics to the fact that he was an athlete. He said, “I felt versatile. I represented both groups … The gang members were also athletes so I could talk to them about similar things … It’s just things you have in common with them.” Alistair, on the other hand, felt that at times he had to hide his academic orientation to maintain social status. He recalled:

“I kind of had two different crews growing up. I played sports … but I had good grades and stuff too … I was in like five AP classes and none of them were in any AP classes … Even talking to them or trying to do homework and stuff, I could never do around them. And I would kind of at times act not smart around them so I don’t seem as if I’m trying to show anything off … I had to dumb down myself around them so things could be more comfortable. Especially when I got into UCLA because one of my close friends felt like I left them.”

Alistair had a complementary set of friends who were in his AP classes that he studied with and with whom he completed group activities. Walter also had two different sets of friends. His “competitive group of friends” was not Black, and he said “those relationships [with competitive students] I built with people to get study guides from. I hung out with them to get those A’s. The other group of friends was my close group of friends.” These students understood the importance of having friends who they could study with and receive academic support from, but they chose to maintain and manage relationships with other friends who were not on the same academic track.

Wesley B. thought that he benefited from having friends who he described as “hood dudes or gang bangers.” According to Wesley, “they tell me what not to do. ‘You don’t wanna get involved in this. Keep going to school and doing what you do.’ They were a positive influence. I feel comfortable with where I’m from. They always wanted me to do well.” Walter also believed that his friends, who many would consider bad influences, were actually beneficial for him. He said:
“They made sure I was doing my work. For example, if they were doing something [negative] they would be like, ‘Naw Walter, you can’t come.’ Still today it’s like, ‘Oh, he’s doing big things at UCLA, let’s make sure he’s focused. We’re not trying to make him do anything crazy.’”

Dante believed that his non-academic peers respected his decision to pursue college and therefore did not attempt to derail his endeavors. According to Dante:

“They saw I had my head on straight and I wasn’t about what they were doing. They were smoking, a lot of them were getting in fights with other racial groups for no reason. It was like they didn’t want to me to mess up what I had going academically … So they just told me to stay away from all that stuff.”

Just one participant spoke about being ridiculed by his classmates in middle school for “acting White.” Kyle said:

“I was bunched in the category of white washed … I guess me being smart put me in the category of white washed cause I didn’t act like a “nigga” … That made me hate education because I felt like if education is going to alienate me from my own race, why pursue it?”

Fortunately for Kyle, his high school experience was different. He characterized his school and his high school peers as supportive. He said:

“I wasn’t identified as white washed … They [classmates] would actually come to me for help. They would talk to me, they would invite me places. They were more on my side as opposed to trying to alienate me away from them and push me toward Hispanics. They actually wanted me to hang out with them. It was different.”

Kyle is the only one from among the 30 interview and focus group participants who discussed how negative sanctions from peers made him want to disengage from school, and even for him that changed significantly once he entered high school. Contrary to the “acting White” research of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) that asserts that Black students are ridiculed for academic success because said success is the domain of Whites, 28 of these students spoke directly about the support they found for their academic achievement from their peers. Some, like Alistair, developed ways to maintain their social standing with their closest friends while developing
other academically supportive groups from among their classmates in their more rigorous courses. They chose to not talk about their classes with their friends or utilized their other common experiences like athletics to bridge the divide between their two worlds. Others chose to primarily associate with other academically oriented students. Through either choosing to avoid negative peers or managing multiple peer groups, these educationally resilient students kept their academic focus and progressed towards their goals of college admission.

**Finding Five: Educationally resilient Black students took advantage of available mentors and community-based programs that promoted their academic success.**

Sixteen of the focus group and interview participants discussed the importance that their communities played in their academic lives. Community mentors and their participation in programs at their schools, in their communities, or at their churches played a role in their educational resilience. In this section I will discuss the role that mentors and community programs played in helping students overcome potential academic barriers.

**The community and mentorship.**

No student benefited from the participation in a community program and the ensuing relationship that developed with a mentor more than Alisha W. She was recruited to participate in a university run outreach program that provides educational outreach service to Black students with 3.0 and higher grade point averages. This program changed Alisha’s life. She spoke of her experience and its impact:

“I met with the director LeJoi [alias]. As a foster youth you catch yourself attaching yourself to anything or anyone that is gonna love you with unconditional love. Or anyone that’s gonna be invested in you, you’re gonna quickly grab on to that. And from that she gave that mentorship that way where I really care about you and I’m really invested in what you’re gonna become. From that I didn’t ever want to go home. She would pick me up and bring me to the programs because my foster parents wouldn’t bring me to the programs … She became that role model and mentor that I had always been looking for. The faith in God, the academic part, the loving unconditional part, the parent that I never really had, she became all that wrapped into one and that’s how I developed a
relationship with her. I latched on to that. … I would follow her around everywhere then eventually I would spend the night at her house filling out applications for college or scholarships. Literally she was that role model for me. That’s how our relationship developed to this day.”

Alisha’s relationship with LeJoi filled multiple needs in her life. Alisha’s physical needs were met when LeJoi took her in and allowed her to live with her after she turned 18 and aged out of the foster care system. Her emotional needs were also filled through the caring relationship that the two of them developed; and her academic needs were also met through the workshops that LeJoi exposed her to and the college preparatory activities, like filling out applications for colleges and scholarships, which they worked on together. For a student that did not have family to provide a buffer against risk, this mentor-mentee relationship was extremely important to both her life and her educational resilience.

Most students did not need the type of relationship that Alisha and LeJoi enjoyed, but seven of the 15 interviewees discussed how their mentors outside of their schools were still important. Crystal described the executive director at a community-based organization where she worked. Her recollection was that “the executive director … took me under her wing and she’s like my “godmom” now. I can call her and even if I’m feeling low she will tell me the truth … She’s such a strong women that I try to be strong just like her.” She continued and explained that she had other mentors who she learned from including an assistant vice-president at US Bank who was from Compton and taught her to “not let where [she] came from define who [she] is.” Devinee also benefited from a mentor who invested in her life. She participated in a mentorship program through Fox Studios. During high school, the students met with their mentors on a bi-weekly basis. When asked who held her to high academic standards, Devinee’s first response was her mentor. She said, “With her I would always talk about schools and how were my grades and what schools I was planning on applying to … I remember I won a
scholarship from Fox studios. It was the first scholarship I had ever won.” According to Devinee, even four years after graduating from high school, she is still in contact with that mentor who “helps her out in tons of ways.”

Mentoring relationships did not only take place within the context of organized programs. For Princeton, a caring neighbor in the community was instrumental in developing his love for math. He said:

“There was also people in my community that also wanted us to do better. Like there is this guy who works with my friend’s dad. He’s an engineer and he went to CSUN and basically he started this program called Math Camp. Just simple. So basically like every Saturday we just go inside his garage, like the kids on the street would just go to his garage and just do math, and just work on math problems.”

The mentoring relationship was a significant one for these students because they could rely on these positive individuals to invest their time, their energy, and their resources into their development, thereby enhancing the students’ educational resilience.

*Extracurricular program participation.*

Participation in community-based programs was another important element that contributed to the resilience of these Black students. Ten of 15 interviewees and six of 15 focus group respondents referred to the importance that extracurricular programs played in their academic preparation. Bonita participated in Upward Bound, a federally funded outreach program designed to help low-income first-generation college goers prepare for university admission. She believes that her participation in Upward Bound established a college-going mindset for her. Bonita said:

“Upward Bound kept me busy. You have tutoring after school; you have Saturday school; you have field trips to go to different Cal States—not only Cal States—but different UC’s as well. … They come to school and visit you in class. They check on your grades. They pull you out of class. And then they checked to see what classes you were in. The classes that you had for Saturday school they matched up with your schedule that you were taking in regular school. So you’re getting extra help at Cal State LA. And they had a
Breana participated in a similar program at UCLA called the Early Academic Outreach Program. One of the opportunities that she had as a program participant was a summer residential program on the UCLA campus. She said, “It helped. It gave us resources that we can utilize in [difficult] classes … We can write papers on a better level … That was probably my first time on a college campus for that long.” Jazlyn found the value of being a part of an educational preparation program in “just being around other students who had the same ambition.” Her participation in several outreach programs led her to the conclusion that she belonged in college.

In addition to school-based outreach programs, student participation in faith-based organizations also contributed to their educational resilience. Melissa attributes her resilience, at least in part, to her spirituality. When asked what contributed to her academic success, she said:

“I definitely think that spirituality has definitely helped and religion. Being involved. I am Muslim, so I was involved in my mosque growing up. I was really active within that setting … One thing that we talked about is having knowledge. When you have that you are able to use that and create something for yourself and your own people that will ultimately benefit you … I definitely think that had really good influence on me. I remember going to study groups at the mosque and it was more than biblical studies. We would study different readings … [The facilitator] was in med school and lead the discussion and she would relate things back to science and tie it in … It was like we were exposed to other things. Even though we were financially poor we were rich in other aspects.”

Crystal also believes that her faith in God has helped to keep her focused both academically as well as in life. When asked at what point she realized that she could overcome a neighborhood that she characterized as violent and scary to ultimately go on to college, she responded:

“In 10th grade I started going to church with my grandmother … She was like you really have to believe in [God] because he does work miracles and I was going through a downward spiral. It was just really hard for me, my self-confidence was like extremely low. I was doing like stupid stuff. I almost died one time. She brought me to church and I got baptized and stuff like that and it just made me … then good stuff started happening.
It was January 26th the day I got baptized and the rest of that year it was just really good stuff. Maybe I have a plan and maybe I have a destiny.”

Melissa’s involvement in her mosque instilled in her a belief that the use of knowledge is important to uplifting yourself and your community. Through her participation in study groups she was also exposed to people like her workshop facilitator and other professionals who she could emulate. Crystal’s involvement in her church helped her to overcome a lack of self-confidence; it helped her to believe that there was a purpose for her life. Her spiritual awakening led to a newfound belief in her capacity to achieve and gave meaning to her life. As a result college became a real, attainable goal for her.

A total of 16 of the 30 interviewees and focus group participants indicated that they were involved in a university-run, community-based, or faith-based program while in high school. These programs helped students by: connecting them to other students aspiring for college admissions, exposing them to rigorous courses and high academic expectations, providing them with important college preparation information, and allowing them to experience life at the university through Saturday and summer programming. The strength of this finding is supported by the survey data. The “Community Meaningful Participation” mean score difference between the UCLA and statewide group was statistically significant (p<0.001) with a moderate effect size of 0.5. This indicates that the resilient Black students took part in more extracurricular activities, were more involved in music, arts, and sports, and were more likely to report that they helped others. Participation in activities outside of the school contributed to their educational resilience.

Finding Six: Schools can foster educational resilience among Black students by establishing a culture of achievement, holding students to high academic standards, and establishing a culture of caring within the school.

The schooling experiences of this group of educationally resilient Black UCLA students were similar in many ways even though they represented both public and private schools from
regions including urban and suburban areas in northern and southern California and the east coast. They generally described their schools in one of two ways. Either their schools were college preparatory for all students or the schools were designed to cater to the academic development of some while contributing to the marginalization of others. Whichever environment the study participants found themselves in, they personally found spaces that promoted academic excellence and college-going, that held them to high expectations, and that demonstrated caring and support.

**School culture and expectations.**

The school environment encouraged achievement among all of the interviewees, though seven of them admitted that their schools as a whole did not promote college going for all students. However, these students found magnet programs and other college preparatory programs within the schools that helped them to reach their academic potentials. Alisha W. attended a high school that was separated into a “regular school” that most students attended, and three magnet programs. She explains:

“8600 was the school code for the regular school students. We were in magnet. I think it starts when they start to recruit us from middle school. They recruit a certain type of student. The Law Magnet, the Math/Science Magnet, for Humanities and Arts – the magnet was looking for certain types of students. The student from Law Magnet was totally different from 8600 students. There were stricter guidelines. They held us to higher expectations … Nobody wanted to be an 8600 student because we knew that there was no type of curriculum or no structure in that type of environment. So there’s a structure that is set that is so sad … We took honors and AP classes. We didn’t take 8600 classes. They were all magnet classes. We were all put in the same classes. We were all in law magnet math, science, honors, APs, all that stuff. We had our own section and our own guidelines. Very rarely did you get an 8600 student in the class.”

According to Alisha’s account, her school did not push all students toward academic achievement and four-year college enrollment. Breana also attended an urban school that was separated into multiple magnets and a “regular” school. She felt that in the magnet “they
They expected more from us. We had a higher level to achieve as far as academic work.” Their schools, and others like theirs, did not serve all students in the same way. For the students fortunate enough to be identified by one of the magnet programs on the campus, the curricular offerings and expectations were more demanding and rigorous.

Other students attended schools that were structured so that every child succeeded. Every morning, Royce left his home in Richmond, CA to attend a private school in wealthy Marin County over an hour away. Attending this school presented some challenges as he and the other students of color from the East Bay were socioeconomically and racially different from the majority of their classmates. But Royce believes that his experiences at his school were invaluable. He said:

“It was structured in a college like setting … Classes were seminar based. All things that I’m learning with the education minor at UCLA I saw at my private high school. There are literature classes on ethnic groups and European literature, world literature, African American literature. It was very reminiscent of college. Almost all classes were honors classes. Everyone was taking honors classes. There were history electives. I took an elective on the Middle East and the Vietnam War. It seemed very structured. It was a college prep school so it was very structured to prepare you for college.”

Clinton also believed that his public school located in the South Bay area of Los Angeles also was structured to promote four-year college attendance for all students. He remembers:

“If you’re going to this school you were taking at least one community college class [per semester] … We had things like mandatory tutoring, like what school has mandatory tutoring if you get like a C in college physics? If it drops below a B you have to go to mandatory tutoring until it goes up. Because of things like that all the administration had that high expectation.”

Clinton believes that most of his friends graduated and attended four-year colleges because the school not only required all students to take community college classes, but also created interventions for students having trouble in those classes.
**Teachers, counselors, and expectations.**

The interview participants could all point to teachers and counselors who held them to high academic standards, expected them to produce their best work, or who encouraged them to pursue college after high school graduation. Bryce talked extensively about several of his teachers. He said that his teachers “cared about [their] education and tried to push [students] to do their assignments.” His chemistry teacher stood out to him. She assigned a lot of difficult work, but according to Bryce, now that he is taking college chemistry he can see how the work in high school prepared him for his future. Kyle also felt that his teachers worked to prepare him for college-level work. He said:

“In the AP classes the teachers talked to us about college. They tried to make the classes as college like as possible … They would tell us that we’re not gonna go easy on you because your professors aren’t gonna care … They would give us a ton of [work] to show us how college life would be … They felt like if you wanted the best educational experiences then you should join the AP class because they would prepare you for college.”

Destiny A. could also identify several teachers who had a positive impact on her and held her to a high standard. She remembered that in one particular class she was underperforming and behaving inappropriately with her friends. She said that her teacher singled her out, “took [her] off to the side and talked to [her] and said ‘You need to leave these people alone and focus on what you need to do.’” Destiny credits his presence in her life as a “huge factor in [her] high school career” because he helped her to focus and avoid negative influences.

Counselors can be avenues to success or barriers to achievement. One of the most important roles that the counselor can play is ensuring that students are enrolled in the correct courses for high school graduation and four-year university admission. They often make their academic expectations clear by the courses that they schedule their students into. Alistair recounted how he began taking Advanced Placement courses in high school:
“It really was a counselor. After freshmen year there was the first AP class people could take as sophomores. It was the AP Comparative Politics and I was like ‘I don’t want to take that’ and she was like ‘No just take it, you’ll do well.’ And she just threw me in there really. Then I realized this is what it takes to get into my dream school UCLA. Before that I had no idea what my schedule was going to be like.”

His counselor recognized his intelligence and his academic potential and, despite his protest, put him in the classes that he should have. Adina O. also had a counselor who ensured that she was taking a competitive schedule.

“I had a good relationship with my counselor. I think it’s just the way my school was, it’s very much family oriented in the sense they really tried to involve your parents … They had me, mom, and dad come in and bring out the A-G requirements and say ‘this is what your daughter is doing. She has to take this, this, and this and then take this next semester.’ It was a Saturday, and she would spend like a half hour with your parents and explain what was required and she did this for all of the students that went there.”

Adina’s counselor worked with her and with her parents to set her on the path to competitive college eligibility.

A second important role that counselors play is providing students with important college-prep information. They often communicate their expectations through the information that they provide for their students. Eleven of the 15 students interviewed for this study spoke of counselors who took it upon themselves to make sure that their students had information about colleges and financial aid. Alisha had a positive experience with her college counselor. She said:

“[My counselor] was awesome. She did what she had to do. She gave us many different opportunities, she really didn’t slack on anything … She gave us so many resources … She would say ‘Look, you’re going to college so this is what you’re gonna do. You’re already doing well so there are lots of opportunities.’

Princeton credits his relationship with his college counselor with helping him to secure scholarship money that he is currently using to finance his first year at UCLA and Bryce said
that his counselor “gave [him] scholarship info and basically kept [him] on point with deadlines like FAFSA [financial aid application].”

High teacher and counselor expectations resulted in these students enrolling in a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. Their high standards allowed the students to understand their own academic capabilities and also helped them to avoid negative influences that could potentially detract from their academic achievement.

Whether attending a school that had a school-wide culture of achievement or attending a school that had special programs that pushed a subset of students toward college, these educationally resilient students felt that they were held to high expectations in school. The survey data show that the UCLA group differed statistically from the statewide group in School High Expectations (p<0.001) with a very strong effect size (d=1). The individual survey items associated with “School High Expectations” are particularly telling. The resilient students were statistically more likely to feel that they had teachers who told them they did a good job, teachers who wanted them to do their best, and teachers who believed they would be a success. Each of the variables was statistically significant (p<0.001) with strong effect sizes (see Table 10).

**Teachers, counselors, and caring.**

The presence of caring adults on campus has been shown to promote educational resilience among students. Their intervention on behalf of their students can be the difference between success and failure, particularly for at-risk students. Ten of the interview participants discussed the impact that caring adults on campus had on their academic achievement. Kyle was a low-income student whose father thought that he should focus more on basketball than academics. However, he had a counselor at his high school that he developed a close relationship with. When asked to describe their relationship, he said:
“We were really, really close. She realized in the beginning that my parents weren’t the best parents on the planet. They didn’t really care. She felt like somebody should care. She didn’t want to waste a brain. That’s what she told me. She did literally everything she could to help me. When I was applying [to college] she helped me everyday. When I got in she helped me decide what school I wanted to go to. When I had to pay for housing she helped me get that money. She helped me buy stuff for my dorm. She did a lot of stuff.”

His counselor went beyond her job requirements to make sure that this student had every opportunity for educational success that other students have. Alistair’s counselor acted similarly on his behalf. Alistair bounced around in foster care for seven years, and he never grew attached to any school because he was never anywhere for longer than six months. His counselor recognized his need for support and stepped in as an advocate for him.

“My senior year I was getting into these schools and I had no idea as to how I was paying for any of them … Every year the seniors have like a scholarship night and you announce what scholarships certain seniors have won. I kind of was thinking I was going to get that one for AVID and I left with nine [scholarships]. The college counselor … applied for scholarships for me that she thought I fit the description. And I won for all of the ones she applied for me. To find someone like that was great. She was like the most influential … I ended up leaving with like $20,000 in my pocket. I was seventeen and I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t have a bank account yet so yeah. God put certain people as blessings in your life and that was definitely was one. So having someone who is really looking out for you on finding funding. That is someone I definitely contribute some of my academic success to.”

Alistair and Kyle had counselors who recognized that they needed financial support and guidance, and they filled a void for these students. Crystal’s counselor was there for her when she needed emotional support. She was asked to describe her high school experience and she immediately began to talk about her counselor. She recalled:

“It was crazy just seeing that he really cared for me. That got us really closer. It got to the point where we would share lunch together, stuff like that … He wanted me to be successful. I would go in there crying and stuff, … he would just really make sure that I was okay. Just seeing that like somebody at such a high position really wanted to help me [succeed] really helped … I did have people other than my sisters and my mom that wanted me to succeed.”
Crystal credits her relationship with her counselor for propelling her to academic success. He did not secure funds for her to attend college like Alistair and Kyle’s counselors, but his emotional support was no less important to her success. He helped her feel comfortable and cared for in her school and that security allowed her to focus on doing well in class.

Counselors were not the only school personnel who demonstrated an ethic of care in the schools. Teachers also showed their students that they believed in them and were interested in them as people. Alistair effectively articulated how teachers exhibited care and support for him. He said:

“It was simple thing. It was them inquiring how I am? How was school? They even offered me financial help in school, groceries for my dorm and things like that. They sent me scholarships I could apply for. It was just little things that showed compassion and they cared. Things that showed someone actually believed I could make it.”

His teachers’ belief in him and his capacity to achieve was important to him.

Savant attended a predominately White, Christian school. She believed that she had a range of teachers from the qualified and caring to the unqualified and unconcerned. To her, “the most qualified were the nicest ones.” She said:

“They always encouraged each student individual and made each student feel special. But for me, Mrs. Sinclair was always trying to cater to me. I was like ‘Why aren’t we studying more black authors?’ and she was like ‘Yeah we can do that.’ And she would change her curriculum to make sure we would read more black authors … So during Black history month we read nothing but black authors my junior year and senior year. We read black authors outside February but she made sure all of February we read black authors. Even with British lit during our junior year it was hard to find black British authors but she still tried to find them.”

Savant’s English teacher was responsive to her request to have a more diverse, multicultural curriculum. These actions made Savant feel valued and kept her engaged in the academic program at her school.
Aaron S. described his life growing up as a struggle. His grandmother worked hard to feed him and pay rent. He said that he credits his fourth grade teacher for his admission into UCLA. He recounted:

“She really empathized with me and started looking out for me in the fourth grade until now. She just kept sticking on me and making sure I was doing my homework. She made home visits and hung out with me on the weekends.”

Aaron’s teacher demonstrated her care for him in multiple ways. She spent time with him outside of class and made sure that he was performing well in class. She also has maintained her relationship with him for over 10 years. He was not simply a student in her class, but he was an individual who she genuinely cared about. From his perspective, her active involvement in his life helped make him into the competitive student that he has become.

Survey data also indicated that resilient students experienced caring relationships from adults in their schools. The group of UCLA students was significantly more likely to report caring school relationships than their peers throughout the state (p<0.001) with a strong effect size of 1.1. The individual survey items that comprised the “School Caring Relationships” were all statistically different between the two groups as well, all with p<0.001. The resilient students felt that they had teachers who cared (d=1.1), teachers who noticed when they were not there (d=0.8), and teachers who listened to them (d=0.8) (see Table 10). These data show that educationally resilient students feel more care from their teachers than the broad statewide group.

Whether the interview and focus group participants attended a school where a college-going culture was the norm or not, they successfully navigated their environments through the help of teachers, counselors, and school administrators who believed in their capacity to achieve. The school personnel held them to high academic expectations and ensured their success by scheduling them into the right classes, offering guidance, and genuinely caring for them. Their
actions contributed to the educational resilience of the students and helped drive them toward academic success.

**Finding Seven:** Educationally resilient Black students used resistance as a means to academic achievement both for themselves and on behalf of their peers.

Resistance theory falls outside of the general scope of the survey administered and interviews conducted for this research. Throughout the interviews, ideas related to resistance and the role that various types of resistance played in academic achievement and overcoming obstacles resonated with many of the interviewees. Resistance has been defined in multiple ways in the literature. For some, “a critical race achievement ideology … considers the act of performing at high levels an act of resistance against the mainstream achievement ideology and notions of school success as a white character trait and act” (Carter, D.J., 2008). In other words, the very act of achieving academic success as a Black student can be viewed as an act of resistance because it challenges the dominant discourse that marginalizes Black students and categorizes them as underachievers in our educational system. Central to this CRT view of achievement and resistance is that Black students view themselves as successful members of the Black community and that their academic success and the success of their friends are racial accomplishments. Delgado-Bernal (2001) asserts that there are multiple types of resistance including conformist resistance that holds no critiques of social oppression but is motivated by social justice, and transformative resistance that both seeks social justice and critiques social oppression. The students in my study exhibited these various forms of resistance, and their resistance was another factor that helped them overcome barriers and achieve success.

**Conformist resistance.**

Conformist resisters are those who want their lives and the lives of others to be better, but more often than not “blame themselves, their families, or their culture for the negative personal
and social conditions” (Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 318). They believe in social justice for everyone without holding a critique of the structures that produce social oppression. For instance, Kyle attended an urban high school in south Los Angeles. He described the behavior of some of his classmates towards his teacher in one of his non-AP classes:

“It was a group of students in the class that weren’t the best people on the planet. It made it hard for her [teacher] to do her job … They took advantage of that she was soft-spoken, she didn’t yell at anyone. That discouraged her from teaching … The students were like, you’re young, I’m young, why should I respect you? Some of them weren’t bad teachers, it was just a whole respect thing going on with them not respecting students and students not respecting them.”

Kyle identified the behavior of his peers as the root problem for their lack of academic achievement. He, on the other hand, adopted behaviors for himself that would lead to success. Unlike many of his classmates who he described as “not good students,” Kyle studied hard and became involved in volunteer work and extracurricular activities because he had high expectations of himself and did not want to “work at McDonald’s.”

Devinee could also be labeled a conformist resister. She described her high school experience:

“It was draining … Students aren’t motivated. As far as 8600 students [non-magnet students], they weren’t motivated. My particular class was motivated, those that were in the magnet programs. We had little to no resources at all. We rarely used our books … Students not learning, just going to class where sitting there is enough to get an ‘A’ in the class. You’re not learning anything.”

Devinee was conscious of the issues in her school but she placed much of the blame for underachievement on the students and their lack of motivation as opposed to on the systems that foster underachievement. She was acutely aware of what she needed to do to be successful. When other students were hanging out, she says that she was studying. She also said:

“I don’t wanna be cocky, but I know how to utilize my resources. I pay attention. If I see someone doing something and it’s better than what I’m doing then I want to be a part
of that because I want to better myself. I pay attention and use my resources and I network.”

Rather than fight a power structure that does not create opportunities for all, Devinee adopted the successful tactic of working within the existing system to achieve.

**Transformational resistance.**

Social justice and a critique of social oppression was a motivating factor for eight of the interview participants and for several of the focus group participants as well. Alisha W. understood that her school community was not ideal. She said:

“I went to high school in greater Los Angeles, urban area, Crenshaw district. You have gangs, the bloods and the crips … [My school] was built like a prison. There are big black gates around the buildings … It’s in the ghetto … We barely had books. The air conditioner barely worked. Teachers didn’t really want to teach.”

Yet Alisha recognized that she, her friends, and her community were not wholly responsible for the negative conditions in her neighborhood. She said:

“Yes, there are students who gangbang. Yes there are students who do this. Let’s think bigger, outside of the box. Why does this school look like this in this neighborhood but in Palisades you don’t have schools that look like this? It’s way bigger than just the students. It’s bigger than the parents. It’s bigger than the administration. It has to do with the government… We didn’t build this school. We didn’t build this prison [the school]. We didn’t design this curriculum that’s being taught to us. You have to be a bigger person and look outside of that and that was my main point.”

For Alisha, it was important that people understand the disparity between her school community and more affluent communities. As a high school senior she wrote an op-ed piece to the Los Angeles Times in response to a negative article written be a visiting teacher about her high school. She also worked as an advocate on behalf of her classmates. As a member of her local neighborhood council, she raised money to get 15 computers and 46 different books donated to her school. She worked with her state assemblyperson and made several trips to the state capitol
to advocate for her school and community. As a fourth year student at UCLA, she has maintained her commitment to her community as an advocate and now as a mentor.

Transformational resistance was not only a strategy for overcoming adversity for students like Alisha who attended urban, public high schools. Royce B. attended an affluent, predominately White school. He spoke of how people viewed his neighborhood and what he learned by going to a school outside of his community:

“I was always aware of the negative perceptions of my community … That it’s poor people, students of color that don’t care. I believed in meritocracy up until high school … the whole idea that affirmative action is unnecessary. People just need to try.”

His belief in a meritocracy was challenged when he became aware of the advantages that affluent students enjoyed that students from his urban community did not.

“Similar personalities matched at the public and private schools. Kids didn’t care [at public school], kids didn’t care [at private school]. Kids doing drugs [at public school], kids doing drugs [at private school] … It’s just that these kids at the [private] high school were going to college regardless. You have the same types of students except on group is rich and White and the other is poor and students of color.”

Royce recognized and took advantage of the resources available to him at his high school, yet he knows that many students from his community are not as fortunate. Today, he says that he is motivated by “equity and trying to fix what’s broken.” He wants to be a teacher because of the disparities that he witnessed between his home community and his school community. He views education as an opportunity to address the inequities that he witnessed.

Dante F. is yet another student who was motivated by the social oppression that he experienced and a desire for social justice. His motivation to excel began close to home. He said:

“I found out how to be a man on my own. My father passed away when I was a young kid, so that influenced me … He and his brothers being in gangs and stuff motivated me to not want to fall into the same path that he did … I would always do what he should
Dante is sensitive to the negative stereotypes associated with growing up in Compton, and he wants nothing to do with them.

“The negative stereotypes are being this gangbanger, rowdy kid. Or just being ‘Black’ as people would say. Not having proper speech, or even not knowing what you are talking about most of the time. Everything that comes with the term Black and that people associate it with, all those negative connotations. That’s what I didn’t want to identify with. I think mostly I wanted to show that not every person who identifies with being Black is portraying that negative image. I think society, the media, exploits the negative things and portrays this image that is not really true about all Black people.”

The influences of Dante’s father and what he identified as negative perceptions of his community and his race helped to drive Dante academically. His determination to counter social oppression is evident in his plans to pursue a degree in public health with the ultimate goal to enter a career in public health to address social issues plaguing communities of color.

Several focus group participants discussed feeling “disrespected” by the structures in their schools. Jacky and Trish remembered how they had to fight to get AP classes in their school. Ava also had to struggle to get AP classes. She recalled:

“I felt disrespected by the school entirely. 10th grade year they wouldn’t offer us AP Chemistry at all. I felt that I should have AP Chem and other AP classes. What I did was I started petitions. We petitioned for 3 or 4 classes that year … We took it down to the district and everything. The school eventually came through. We won … I don’t think we should have had to fight tooth and nail to get classes that would help us compete with other students who were trying to go to college … I think it was about the system. Because we were in the inner city they didn’t feel that we needed those types of courses or that we would make anything of ourselves. We didn’t have books so they just didn’t care.”

These students all recognized that their schools were not providing them with an opportunity to be academically competitive, a fact that they attributed to their race and their socioeconomic status. They were driven by their convictions and a desire to fight against systemic forces that depressed achievement in their communities.
Summary

In this chapter I presented findings from interviews and focus groups conducted with 30 Black UCLA undergraduates. The data show that sociocultural (family, peers, community) influences, institutional experiences, and resistance ideology foster resilience in students by protecting them against negative pressures, by supporting their academic efforts, and by developing a social justice orientation that encourages achievement.
Chapter Six
Discussion

Evidence found in this study shows that sociocultural and institutional influences both play an important role in the educational resilience of Black students. Though there were certainly limitations to the study, the data that I collected suggest that with the proper support structure in place, Black students can overcome known risk factors and excel academically. Even under the most challenging circumstances – low-income, single-parent family, foster care, physical and sexual abuse, urban, public schools – my study participants demonstrated educational resilience at least in part because of the people and organizations that pushed them to achieve. It is evident to me that more Black students can reach their academic potentials if families, friends, communities, and schools are intentional about creating a culture that produces academic success.

In my final chapter, I discuss recommendations that come from my research findings. The recommendations are organized around my theoretical framework and the four major domains incorporated in my study: family, peers, community, and school. Within each of these sections I discuss the conclusions that I have drawn from my research and the implications that these findings have on each entity. I then discuss the limitations of the study followed by suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Families and Resilience

Black families foster educational resilience by setting high academic expectations, motivating students, being actively involved, and by setting an example for students to follow.

The results of this study suggest that families play a pivotal role in the educational resilience of Black students. Many of the study participants were mandated, encouraged, pushed, and generally supported to not only complete high school, but to prepare for entry into a
competitive university upon graduation. Many educationally resilient students have families that are caring, structured, and set high expectations for students (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). They are not always directly involved in the daily educational activities of the resilient students, but they establish the caring, encouraging environment in which these Black students can be successful. Throughout the interview phase of my data collection, I consistently heard comments like the following:

“She [mother] really couldn’t offer help with homework and things like that. What she offered me was support and told me to keep trying. That was always help for me. That was all I needed. Instead of me giving up on myself, she wouldn’t let me give up on myself. That was the biggest motivation she gave me.” (Alistair S.)

Families that create a supportive, nurturing environment initiate protective mechanisms that shield students from negative influences and foster educational resilience (Floyd, 1996; Gribble, et al., 1993). Alistair was the product of a single-parent home and his mother did not attend college. Yet, despite her own lack of educational attainment, she encouraged his perseverance through adversity and ultimate educational progress. The encouragement that he received from his mother motivated him to achieve.

The presence of role models in the lives of these students was also important. When a student has a role model who they personally know, they have higher self-esteem and higher grades than students who either do not have role models or whose role models are individuals that they do not actually know (Yancey, Siegel, & McDaniel, 2002). Seven of the 15 interview participants reported that they had a sibling or other close family member who was instrumental in paving the way for their academic success. Their older family members were influential in establishing an academic path for them to follow and helping them to chart their course to academic success by pushing them to take the proper classes, engage in college preparatory activities, and allowing them to see that college enrollment and success is both possible and
worthwhile. Royce talked about how influential his older brother was on his pursuit of postsecondary education:

“I think definitely having that experience of having an older brother going through the process just made it something that was not an option. It was expected that I was going to graduate from high school and go to college. The fact that he was very successful also played a role just because it was a benchmark that I was forced to live up to.”

He, and the other participants in the study who were fortunate enough to have older family members to emulate, benefited greatly from those relationships.

It is interesting that, based upon the survey data, there were no significant differences between the 104 educationally resilient Black students and the statewide group of Black students except for on one survey item measuring Home Variables. When asked “At home, there was a parent or adult who believed I would be a success,” the resilient students were statistically more likely to respond either “pretty much true” or “very true” than their peers throughout the state (p<0.001) with a moderate effect size of 0.4. These data show that having a parent or family member who believed in their success was important for the resilient students, and that belief may impact how caregivers interact with their children. Crystal spoke specifically to this issue. When I asked her if her mother held the same expectations for her and her sisters, she said, “No, personally I think she pushed me more than anyone else … I think she started seeing like that I was really serious in 8th grade … She started pushing me more to go to some university.” Even within the same home, parents did differentiate between their children and what they believed they would be capable of accomplishing in school. At least in part, that difference in belief in the student’s success dictated how the parent engaged in the academics of their children.

My study presents data that do not support the oppositional cultural frame of reference explanation for underachievement (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1981, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). The Black families in the study supported educational achievement as a goal and
encouraged their children to excel within that domain. They did not teach their children that academic achievement was the purview of Whites therefore something that they should shun. Instead, they taught their children that they were capable and should achieve in school just like anyone else. When Selah found herself disengaged in school, her mother asked her, “Do you think the White children are doing this [slacking off]?” She said that her parents taught her that as a Black woman she should work “extra hard to prove [her]self.” That mindset, developed as a child, is one that she uses to push her to this day. Other students throughout the study either identified their “Blackness” and pride in being Black as motivating factors, or they simply did not address the issue of race at all. But none of the students believed that educational success was the prerogative of White America.

My study data also contradict the Attitude-Achievement Paradox (Mickelson, 1991). The study participants were very much aware of the disparities in the American opportunity structure, yet this knowledge did not inhibit their academic performance. It seems that their family structures that actively encouraged and supported academics helped to buffer them from developing “concrete attitudes” about school that would lead to educational disengagement. Rather, it seems that their abstract and concrete attitudes about school and education are both consistent with effort and achievement in school (Downey, 2009). They identified education as an asset that would help them to ultimately reach their life goals.

**Discussion of Peers and Resilience**

*Educationally resilient Black students had peer groups that shared their academic aspirations and ambition and these shared aspirations led to behavior that promoted academic success.*

Black students and other at-risk groups benefit from having friends that possess high achievement motivation and positive attitudes toward school and education (Wang, et al., 1994). My study suggests that educationally resilient Black students received high levels of support
from their peer groups. The most pervasive characteristic of their peer groups was their support of each other and their academic goals.

The support that these students experienced among their peers was primarily the result of shared goals and academic aspirations. In some cases, they developed friendships with particular students because they were in the same classes, same magnet programs, or same small learning communities (SLC’s) in their schools. For instance, Alisha attributed her choice of friends to the Law Magnet that she participated in at her school. She said, “the Law Magnet program was why I was centered around people who were going to the same place I wanted to go.” Prior to her acceptance into the Law Magnet, she described her friends as “bad people” who smoked marijuana and got into fights. Yet, her inclusion into an academic program that promoted achievement for the magnet students allowed her to associate with pro-education peers. Similarly, Breana participated in the New Media Academy SLC at her school. According to her, she did not associate with students who were in the general population at her school, but her friends were all from her SLC. She said that they all enjoyed the same things, took classes together, and studied together. The opportunity to interact with like-minded peers who held similar educational aspirations provided support for these students. They found themselves working toward the goal of college admission and employed strategies that supported their endeavors.

While some students benefited from special programs that forced them to interact with pro-education peers, other students in the sample made conscious decisions to only associate with other students who were focused on education. Devinee said that, “I hung around magnet students and college motivated students – students who were interested in getting scholarships and bettering themselves and competing.” She believed that her peers who were not striving to
do well academically detracted from her own achievement, so she chose to spend her time with people who could support her goals.

Several of the students in the study mentioned that they simultaneously maintained friendships with pro-education peers and a more social group that often did not emphasize educational achievement. For instance, Dante had a set of friends that he took classes with, and a different set who were on the football team. He said his friends in his classes “were just my friends who held me accountable as far as academics … We made sure we all turned in our assignments on time and made sure we did what we had to do.” His closest group of friends was his football teammates. That was the group that he most identified with. He said:

“When I need someone to talk to … they are going to be honest and straight forward and tell me what I should do for the most part … we would go to the movies together or parties together. Those are my friends that I could hang with at anytime or moment of the day. And I still kick it with a good portion of them now that I am out of high school and doing my own thing.”

Though Dante did not socialize with his classmates outside of the classroom, they were a beneficial part of his high school experience because they provided each other academic assistance and support that kept them all on track.

Regardless of whether the study’s educationally resilient students became friends with their academically inclined peers by choice or because they were involved in the same academic program in their schools, I found that all of my participants belonged to a group that supported and encouraged each other to excel academically. They relied on these friends to hold them accountable for their academic performance and as homework and study partners.

My study participants did not fall victim to the negative pressures exerted on them by peers who were not engaged in academics. Many of them were called “nerd” or “geek” or had classmates that did not associate with them because of their academic focus. Some masked their
academic orientation while with friends who were not as interested in doing well in class. There was an element of oppositional cultural frame of reference present in their environments. Yet, these students still achieved. Their own resolve and determination, and their support networks among their families, other peers, and schools were strong enough to counter any negativity that they had to endure. The critical insight that I discovered is that resilient students did not have to choose an academic group of friends over a less academically-inclined group to succeed. Many successful students were able to maintain their social standing with students who exhibited oppositional behavior. The consistent thread between the resilient students was that they all had peer groups who they could rely upon to support their academic achievement.

Finally, the data from the “Peer” variables on the survey show that there are no differences in how the educationally resilient students perceive their peer caring relationships or peer expectations. Both sets of students equally believe that their friends care for them and hold them to a high standard. At first glance this data may seem to suggest that there are no differences between the peer groups of educationally resilient Black students and their peers who are not as successful academically. Further investigation is necessary into the manner in which both groups define and understand caring relationships and high expectations before one can make that claim. For example, the question “I have friends who did well in school” is relative depending upon how a student defines doing well in school. Possibly highly educationally resilient students define doing well differently than other students. This is an area that needs further research.

**Discussion of Community and Resilience**

*Educationally resilient Black students took advantage of available mentors and programs that promoted their academic success.*
Survey data comparing the group of Black UCLA students and the statewide group of Black students indicate that the educationally resilient students were statistically more likely to participate in extracurricular activities than their peers (p<0.001), with an effect size of 0.5. This is consistent with previous research that shows that extracurricular activity participation fosters educational achievement by allowing students to practice social and academic skills and by strengthening their ties to the community and their schools (Nettles, Mucherah, & Jones, 2000).

The students in this study took advantage of opportunities to network, interact with caring individuals, and to participate in meaningful activities that promoted their academic engagement and resilience.

The interview participants were exposed to caring adults within their communities who actively supported the students in various ways. For some students, the caring adult took care of their physical needs. Crystal mentioned that her mentor:

“Always made sure we were fed, clothed, [and] happy. I think that was the biggest thing, just knowing that we didn’t really have to worry about anything because he would always take care of us when my mom couldn’t.”

Though his contribution to her was not directly related to her academics, it impacted her ability to perform academically by allowing her to focus on education rather than material necessities like food and clothes.

Other students benefited from the relationships that they developed as a result of the college preparatory programs that they participated in. Jazlyn spoke of the impact one such program had on her:

“So having the mentors was when I had someone to really look up to that I could always come to. So, just seeing the [college] students in the flesh. They always emphasized education. They always emphasized their passion and how it relates to education. As I got older I started discovering more what I wanted to do - where I could go in college that was going to help me pursue that exact career, that passion. Because [it] was an education program, they emphasized that.”
Her involvement in the program exposed her to caring individuals who gave her guidance and support as she progressed through high school and prepared for college. Other focus group and interview participants also indicated that their participation in college preparatory programs exposed them to the rigors of high level academics, allowed them to interact with academically competitive peers from other schools, and gave them access to needed resources like college preparatory information and scholarships.

Consistently, I found that educationally resilient Black students had at least one individual outside of the home who paid particularly close attention to them, supported them, and in many cases offered necessary academic guidance.

*Educationally resilient Black students used resistance as a means to academic achievement both for themselves and on behalf of their peers.*

I was shocked to discover the role that resistance played in fostering resilience in my study participants. Broadly defined from a critical race theory perspective, all of these educationally resilient Black students displayed resistance in that their high levels of academic performance directly countered the dominant achievement ideology that asserts that academic success is the domain of White America (D. J. Carter, 2008). There was no indication that any of these students bought into the notion that academic success was a White domain. In fact, several of them consciously shouldered the burden of proving that Black students are just as capable as White students to excel academically. Selah’s parents taught her early in life that it was her responsibility to perform as well or better than her White peers. They challenged her whenever she was struggling in a class and compared her performance to her White peers. She ultimately accepted their philosophy and worked very hard to compete with her classmates. She said that in high school she thought, “I couldn’t let the White kids beat me; well I couldn’t let
anyone beat me.” Her resistant posture extended beyond the classroom as well. She, and other
participants like Jazlyn would not let other students belittle or demean them or their classmates
because they were Black. When they attempted to, these resistant students would challenge them
directly or take the issue to their parents or to school administrators.

The resistance discussion is included in the community and resilience section because the
students who exhibited *transformational resistance* learned to resist through university-
sponsored, faith-based, and community-based programs. Through one such community
organization, Breana learned how important it was for her to advocate on behalf of the students
attending public schools in her community:

“[We learned] to develop the community as far as fighting for equality, fighting for
resources, fighting against … liquor stores and gangs and crime. Just to make the
community aware of the state it’s in and try and help it out. Try and build a more
positive community. And for me, I was a student leader so I was like a student activist
where we held meetings concerning just people from [my high school] … What are some
resources that we didn’t have or did have as opposed to other schools in the community
… We would hold meetings during lunch times called “High School Organizing” and we
would just talk about the concerns of the students. What they didn’t like, what they were
happy about, because that all impacted our ability to achieve our education.”

Jazlyn’s participation in a university-sponsored program led to the development of a similar
transformational resistant perspective as Breana. She participated in a 5-week summer
residential program, and one of her assignments was a research project. She said:

“I did research on racial micro-aggression and how it effects many students staying in
college or in high school with their educations, how it affects their performance. Even
analyzing why certain graduation rates might be low or drop out rates high. Does that
[racial micro-aggression] have any effect on it? I didn’t really know about that term until
my TA told me about it and I realized how much it really does affect us. Ever since that
research it just pops up. I just snap to it. Cause I realize actually how much it occurs. And
no one ever knew a name for it.”
Through her program, Jazlyn learned about racial micro-aggression and its’ prevalence throughout both high school and the university. She used that experience, took it back to her high school, and became an advocate against racial micro-aggressions in her school.

Melissa’s training in her mosque developed her stance as a transformational resister and ultimately impacted her desire to want to be a teacher. According to her, the books that she was exposed to ideas of social injustice and community activism while studying in the mosque.

“The books [I read] talked a lot about developing your own community … Other communities do [bring resources back to the community]. They always acquire knowledge, get degrees and help bring that back to their community and start businesses and things like that to be able to help [their] people … That’s one of the reasons why I definitely want to be a teacher. I know that African Americans and minorities in general we struggle in the math and sciences and I feel if I help in that aspect that would be amazing. I oftentimes hear people say that they hate math and science. It encourages you more to stick this out because I am in the generation that hates math. The math and sciences are what push countries ahead.”

Melissa, and other students throughout the study, found the will to overcome challenges and persevere through adversity through the community organizations that they belonged to and because of the mentors and role models that they were exposed to. They not only received invaluable college preparatory information, but they also had opportunities to participate in meaningful activities in their communities that led to interactions with caring adults and for some, a heightened awareness of social issues that they could address through action.

**Discussion of Schooling and Resilience**

*Schools can foster educational resilience among Black students by establishing a culture of achievement, holding students to high academic standards, and establishing a culture of caring within the school.*

The interview and focus group data support the existing research that asserts that college-going culture, high expectations, and caring adult relationships in schools positively impact student engagement and performance. Repeatedly, participants recounted powerful stories and
experiences that highlighted the presence and underscored the importance of those key factors to their academic success.

One thing that stands out most as I consider the importance of the schooling experience for this group of Black students is that the students did not need all of their teachers to hold them to high expectations or to develop caring relationships with them. Many of the students did not attend schools that were known for their college-going culture. What seemed to matter most for these students was there was at least one teacher or counselor who believed in them and their success or that there was at least one adult on campus who developed a positive relationship with them. Several of the students, particularly those attending urban, public high schools pointed out that their schools did not on the whole have strong college-going cultures nor did their teachers and counselors hold the student body to high academic expectations. Devinee, who attended one such high school, recalled that she remembers:

“Teachers not teaching; teachers who had tenure who were sticking around even though they shouldn’t be teaching anymore. Students not learning, just going to class where sitting there is enough to get an “A” in the class. [Students] were not learning anything.”

In that one statement Devinee identified that within her school she was fully aware that there were teachers whose practices were not preparing students for academic success. Her peers could earn high grades with minimal effort. Her personal experience was quite different. Her assessment of her own teachers in the Law Magnet at her school was that they were well prepared and had a solid curriculum in place. She remarked, “there were teachers I just never would have had because I was Law Magnet.” Although her school did not educate all students equally, she was exposed to adults who were committed to her success. Dante, another public school student commented that his English teacher also taught her English classes differently. One class simply followed the textbook and followed district and state standards. His class,
However, was taught in a manner to help the students “prepare for college-type assignments …
They treated the students who were more gifted and talented different because they knew [they] were going to graduate. They wanted to make sure those students were getting taught the information they should be getting taught.” Again we see that teachers tracked their students and held differentiated expectations for their students depending upon their assessment of the students’ capabilities.

The stratification of students into levels of perceived capacity was at least partially responsible for variation in relationships developed with school personnel, quality of instruction, and academic expectations set – a phenomenon that is consistent with the literature (Burris, et al., 2008; Oakes, 1985, 2008; Oakes & Guiton, 1995). The students who demonstrated academic achievement through earning entry into magnet programs, gifted/talented programs, or the honors track seemed to have more access to teachers and counselors who worked on their behalf to ensure that they would succeed academically in high school and college. They also seemed to be more likely to develop positive relationships with adults on campus. Those positive relationships gave these students access to requisite college information as well as emotional, psychological, and financial support that proved critical to their pursuit of postsecondary education.

*Educationally resilient Black students were significantly more likely to have positive school experiences than their Black peers throughout the state.*

The survey data show that educationally resilient Black students had a significantly more positive schooling experience than their peers throughout California. They exhibited significantly higher connection to school and more meaningful participation at school (see Table 6). They also benefited from higher expectations and more caring relationships from their
teachers. With so many factors working in their favor relative to their peers, it is no wonder that these students were successful relative to other Black California students.

These findings are consistent with the qualitative data gathered for this study. As discussed in previous sections, the study participants from UCLA clearly described how their academic experiences were markedly different from their friends who did not demonstrate the same academic resilience or academic promise.

Discussion of Impact of Sociocultural and Institutional Assets on Resilience

Variation in educational resilience assets can be predicted by the sociocultural and institutional influences in a Black student’s life.

The regression analysis used in this study indicates that both the sociocultural and institutional variables are significant in the overall educational resilience of Black students. The unadjusted regression coefficients suggest that each of the sub-scales is a statistically significant predictor of educational resilience (see Table 7). An increase in any of the sub-scale variables will lead to an observed increase in educational resilience.

It became clear through the qualitative analysis of focus groups and surveys that the respondents received support and were bolstered in multiple ways. In some instances, family members were a catalyst for academic success and resiliency; in other cases students could not rely on family support, but they received support from friends, community programs, or their schools. Ideally students would have the benefit of all of these protective factors in their life, but the presence of at least one of them can have a significant impact on the resilience of a student.

Recommendations

Families
The findings of this study reveal that families can play a critical role in the development of educational resilience for Black students. In analyzing the study’s findings related to family influence, the following ideas have surfaced:

- **Parents should establish the expectation for postsecondary education for their children.** I acknowledge that college enrollment may not be the most appropriate option for all students depending upon their academic and career interests, but every student should have the option to pursue a college education. Too often parents and students eliminate themselves from four-year college admissions contention by making choices before the students have matured enough to make the best choice for themselves. There are a number of ways that families can establish the expectation for postsecondary education. First, families should engage in conversations related to college beginning when the student is young. These conversations should emphasize the importance of continuing an education beyond high school and should also connect education to the student’s academic and career aspirations. Families should also begin to connect students to colleges at an early age. They can visit local college campuses, research various colleges on-line, and request college information from universities throughout the country. Parents can also take advantage of engaging activities like watching college athletic events as opportunities to discuss future academic options.

- **Parents should hold students accountable for their academic performance beginning in elementary school and through high school.** The students in this study had different levels of parent involvement in their education. Some had parents who checked homework and attended events at school. Others had parents who were not actively involved at all with education. In an ideal situation, all students would have parents or
caregivers who take a vested interest in their academic performance to increase the chances of building educational resilience and developing a successful student. As early as possible, parents should encourage and develop good study habits with their children. This could mean establishing set homework and study times after school, mandatory reading time each evening, and limited television and computer time throughout the week. Parents should also pay attention to the quality of homework assignments that their children and turning in as well as their grades in all classes. Regardless of academic performance, parents should communicate with their children’s teachers and counselors regularly. Teachers and counselors should be aware of the student’s academic goals and should know that the student has an involved parent who will hold the student and school accountable for academic performance and preparation. These relationships with school personnel will allow parents to most effectively advocate on behalf of their children should the need arise.

- **Parents should identify pro-education community groups, faith-based groups, or university programs for their children to participate in.** The majority of the students interviewed for this study indicated that they were part of an organization that fostered educational achievement by exposing them to critical college-going information, mentors, and like-minded, academically inclined peers. These groups can complement a family’s efforts to promote academic achievement. They can also be an important source of valuable information for parents and caregivers who may not have immediate access to important college preparatory information.

- **Parents should pay attention to the friends that their children spend time with.** The research findings from this study show that the academic performance and objectives of a
student’s peers are an important factor in a student’s own academic objectives. Parents should familiarize themselves with their children’s friends and when possible, connect them to students who share similar academic goals. There are many ways to find academically-oriented students including clubs and organizations at the school and student participants in extra-curricular activities in the community.

Schools

This study’s findings show that educationally resilient Black students benefited from more positive schooling experiences than their peers. Based upon these findings, I offer the following recommendations for schools:

- **Schools should ensure that all students are connected to a caring adult on campus.**

  The data from this research study show that educationally resilient students had at least one adult on campus that was interested and invested in their success. Schools should create opportunities for all students to engage with personnel who know their goals and aspirations and who are committed to pushing them toward their goals. Schools can establish mentoring programs and other after-school programs that connect students to campus adults. Schools can also include discussions around the importance of a caring school environment in their professional development trainings so that teachers and administrators can buy into the concept of caring as a means for increasing academic performance for students and develop creative ways to operationalize a caring environment in their schools. Teachers should be encouraged to intentionally expand their reach beyond the students that they may naturally gravitate to and identify more students to personally engage, encourage, and nurture.
• **Schools should ensure that all students have access to a rigorous curriculum.** School tracking practices serve to stratify the school population and establish a culture where there are a subset of students who have access to resources necessary for academic engagement and success and another subset of students who do not. Research shows that the academic tracking of students has no benefit for students in the high academic track, and it only serves to marginalize and disadvantage those unfortunate enough to be placed on the less rigorous track (Burris, et al., 2008; Oakes, 2008; Yonezawa, Wells, & Serna, 2002). The research from this study shows that in many cases educationally resilient students found themselves as part of magnet programs or on the higher academic track because they had proactive parents who advocated for them, because they advocated for themselves, or because they tested into such programs. Many students do not have parents who know to seek out programs that will challenge and support their students, and they find themselves on tracks that will not prepare them for postsecondary education. Schools can minimize this phenomenon by creating school cultures that support the college-going of all students, not a select few.

• **School districts should consider increasing the number of SLC’s and magnet programs that they support.** These models in and of themselves are not the answer to the problems in education. However when properly designed and run, they can: create opportunities for students with similar interests to work together, create structures that encourage more interaction between teachers, counselors, and their students, and increase collaboration between teachers. In these models, school personnel have more opportunities to get to know the students and families that they serve and therefore develop relationships that can lead to academic success.
• **Schools should increase the opportunities for students and parents to receive college information.** Schools should ensure that all teachers have an understanding of college requirements so the teachers can support the work of counselors in their schools. Students spend the majority of their time throughout the school day with their teachers, not their counselors. Teachers have a platform where they can disseminate basic college information to students. I am not suggesting that teachers should be trained as college counselors, but they should have a working knowledge of the course and grade requirements for college admission. Schools should also change the dominant paradigm where parents only become involved at the school if a child is in trouble. Schools need an environment that welcomes parents, many of whom may have had bad experiences with the educational system themselves. School parent centers can be strengthened, parents can be invited to volunteer and participate in school functions, and the scheduling of parent meetings and school events should take into account the realities of the population the school serves. That may mean hosting open houses and “Back to School” nights on the weekend rather than in the evening. Or it could mean providing food and child care at various events so that working parents can bring their younger children and still participate.

**Community Programs**

Community-based, university-based, and faith-based organizations play an important role in fostering resilience among Black students. The following recommendations are based upon the findings of this study:

• **Community programs serving Black students should consider including components of critical consciousness and critical action in their program models.** Several of the
successful programs that students discussed in this study had a strong social justice orientation that connected students to their own academic aspirations while helping them to think critically about a system that advantages some and disadvantages others. The awakening of their own critical consciousness led to critical action on behalf of other students. By mobilizing students to think outside of themselves, these programs created a culture where students advocated on behalf of their peers to enact change in their schools and in their communities. In so doing, more students gained access to resources like computers, textbooks, and advanced courses. These advocacy efforts helped the programs reach and impact the lives of more students than they otherwise could have.

- **Community programs should find opportunities to educate and support parents.**

Many community programs have limited capacity due to budget constraints. Efforts can be made to increase their reach by providing a broad type of outreach to parents who may lack relevant college-going information. Community-based organizations, including churches, have the advantage of being known and respected in the communities that they serve, often to a greater degree than the schools. Parents who may be unwilling to engage in the schooling environment may be more willing to participate in activities and workshops hosted by organizations that they feel a connection to or have an affinity for. Programs can leverage those connections to educate and support parents as they prepare their children for postsecondary education.

- **Community programs should link their participants to mentors and potential role models.** Many community programs already seek to pair their student participants with professional and academic mentors, but some programs have a greater emphasis on disseminating college information than on critical relationship building. To the extent
possible, programs should consider ways to engage participants in meaningful, caring relationships with adults. For students who may not have those relationships at home or at school, this creates an opportunity for them to be supported by an important advocate.

**Limitations of the Study**

Though I tried to conduct a comprehensive study of educationally resilient Black students, this study is not without its’ limitations. First, I made a determination at the beginning of the study to focus my research on external factors that foster resilience rather than on internal, individual characteristics that students may possess. This decision was made consciously because I want this study to influence how families, schools, and programs seek to foster resilience for all students, not just those that may have a particular set of innate characteristics.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that I believe that these educationally resilient students may also possess some of the characteristics related to resilience including: intellectual ability, high expectations, internal locus of control, self-esteem, self-efficacy, strong interpersonal skills, and sociability (Benard, 1991; Garmezy, 1991; Masten, et al., 1988). These traits may help to explain why educationally resilient students are more likely to persist through adversity. They may also explain why some students are able to form relationships with caring, supportive adults and some are not. Students who are more sociable and have a more positive disposition are possibly more likely to be able to connect in meaningful ways with adults. I argue that many of the characteristics that may be innate in some students can be developed in others with the proper support. For instance, students can learn to set high expectations for themselves, to develop interpersonal skills, or to believe in their own ability to control their life outcomes. So, though some students may have these traits, others can acquire them and that is what this study is about.
I limited my study of educationally resilient students to Black UCLA students. I believe that these students represent a good proxy for other educationally resilient students throughout the country, but using a sample from just one location does limit the study because one must consider whether the findings are transferable to other environments. Merriam (2001) indicates that to increase generalizability, the researcher can use “rich, thick description” (p. 227) to detail the findings of the study. I attempted to use rich and detailed accounts from participants to support all findings presented in this study. To enhance transferability of findings, I also employed a purposeful sample strategy for focus group and interview participants that reflected the diversity of Black students throughout California. My sample included low and high socioeconomic students, students from urban and suburban areas, students from single and two-parent homes, and students who were both first-generation and not first-generation college-goers. The goal was to provide insight from within the various backgrounds of resilient students.

This study is potentially limited by my own biases as the principal researcher. I engaged in this work with an existing theoretical framework in mind, and that frame could possibly influence me to misinterpret data to fit into my framework and assumptions. I attempted to mitigate my biases in this process by employing several outside researchers to assist with the coding and interpreting of focus group and interview data.

Future Research

This study illuminated several anticipated findings, but also unveiled unanticipated findings. Future research should look more closely at the differing schooling experiences of educationally resilient students and their less successful peers. While I gained some insight into the different experiences from the survey data, surveys did not allow me to understand the experiences of less educationally resilient students. A qualitative comparison study between
educationally resilient students and their less academically successful peers would further our understanding of how disparate schooling experiences impact educational achievement. I also anticipated finding that the home and peer survey data would differ significantly between the educationally resilient students and the statewide group. I believe that qualitative data that looks closely at the home, peer, community, and schooling experiences of educationally resilient students and their peers is a critical component of the Black student resilience research. A qualitative study may unearth differences in experiences between the two groups that the survey could not.

This particular study focused on the educational resilience of Black students, but it would be valuable to know whether or not the supports necessary for Black students are the same for other racial/ethnic groups. A future study could examine the similarities and differences in protective factors for educationally resilient students across race. It is possible that the support mechanisms are the same, but it may be possible that we should employ different methods when working to enhance the academic performance of students from different ethnic groups.

Future researchers can consider extending this research to other institutions beyond UCLA. I believe that much can be learned by looking at students who matriculated into other types of institutions including small liberal arts colleges and private colleges and universities.

Finally, this same type of study can be employed to examine educational resilience of students while in college. Black students drop-out of college at disproportionately higher rates than White and Asian students. Future research can take this study’s design and apply it in a higher education context to understand what supports should exist to help Black students graduate from college.

Concluding Remarks
This research was conceived as an extension of my professional experience working in outreach at UCLA for nearly 15 years, as well as because of my role as a father of three Black sons. Originally I thought that I would conduct research to better understand Black student underachievement. I am glad that the project became a study of successful students. Far too often researchers and practitioners focus on what is going wrong in the Black community rather than trying to understand and learn from what is working. I hope that a focus on highly successful students can encourage parents, students, schools, and programs as we all grapple with the achievement gap that is not dissipating.

To address the achievement gap effectively, I believe that we as a society have to come to terms with the distinction between equality and equity. Equality by definition refers to “sameness” in resources and opportunities, while equity refers to a system where unequal goods, resources, and opportunities are distributed to ultimately create systems and schools and communities that can one day become equal (Brayboy, Castagno, & Maughan, 2007). The history of race relations in this country that includes centuries of slavery and racial subjugation has led to, among other things, the achievement gap that we observe today. When we as a society begin to understand that our focus on individual agency is misplaced because of the uneven starting points of underrepresented minorities, we can then begin to strive for equity and justice and ultimately achieve equality. To me, this means we need a concerted effort to replicate the positive experiences of the students in this study. Educators and educational institutions may not have the ability to influence all areas that affect a student’s life but educational institutions can be a hub in the community from which positivity and societal change emanates. All students need to attend schools that are committed to the success of every student. All students should have access to caring and supportive adult figures in their schools and in
their communities. All students should be encouraged to pursue some form of postsecondary education when they graduate from high school. As we begin to see these things happen, I believe that there will be a shift in communities. Educated students become educated adults who have careers and raise more children who understand and believe in the importance of education. The ripple effect of caring for our students today can have a great impact for generations.
Appendix A

Please mark how you feel about each of the following statements.
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree</th>
<th>Nor Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel close to people at my school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am happy to be at my school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel like I am part of this school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The teachers at this school treat students fairly.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I feel safe in my school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, mark how TRUE you feel the next statements are about your HIGH SCHOOL and things you might have done there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. who really cares about me.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. who tells me when I do a good job.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. who notices when I’m not there.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. who always wants me to do my best.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. who listens to me when I have something to say.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. who believes that I will be a success.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At school ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. I do interesting activities.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I help decide things like class activities or rules.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I do things that make a difference.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next statements are about what might occur outside your school or home, such as in your NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY, or with an ADULT other than your parents or guardian(s).

Outside of my home and school, there is an adult . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. who really cares about me.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. who tells me when I do a good job.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. who notices when I am upset about something.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. who believes that I will be a success.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. who always wants me to do my best.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. who I trust.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outside of my home and school, I do these things . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. I am part of clubs, sports teams, church/temple, or other group activities.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I am involved in music, art, literature, sports, or a hobby.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I help other people.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How true do you feel these statements were about you when you were in high school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24. I have goals and plans for the future.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I plan to graduate from high school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I plan to go to college or some other school after high school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I know where to go for help with a problem.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I can work out my problems.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I can do most things if I try.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. There are many things that I do well.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I try to understand what other people go through.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. When I need help I find someone to talk with.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I enjoy working together with other students my age.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. I stand up for myself without putting others down.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I try to understand how other people feel and think.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. There is a purpose to my life.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I understand my moods and feelings.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. I understand why I do what I do.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How true are these statements about your FRIENDS?

I have a friend my own age . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42. who really cares about me.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. who talks with me about my problems.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. who helps me when I’m having a hard time.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My friends . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45. get into a lot of trouble.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. try to do what is right.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. do well in school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**CALIFORNIA HEALTHY KIDS SURVEY**

**How true are these statements about your HOME or the ADULTS WITH WHOM YOU LIVE?**

In my home, there is a parent or some other adult . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48. who expects me to follow the rules.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. who is interested in my school work.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. who believes that I will be a success.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. who talks with me about my problems.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. who always wants me to do my best.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. who listens to me when I have something to say.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At home . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54. I do fun things or go to fun places with my parents or other adults.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. I do things that make a difference.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. I help make decisions with my family.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Dissertation Study of Educational Resilience of African-American Students

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? The study is being done by Justyn Patterson, a doctoral candidate in UCLA’s Educational Leadership Program.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY? The purpose of the study is to understand the educational experiences of Black UCLA students as they prepared themselves for admissions to a highly selective university.

WHAT KINDS OF QUESTIONS WILL BE ASKED? Questions about your educational experiences, particularly those related to how your family, peers, community, and schools influenced your educational decisions.

DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE? Participate in the study is voluntary. And if you choose to participate and later decide that you no longer want to continue, there will be no repercussions or consequences. You can pull out at any point.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE? The study will take place in three phases. The first phase, survey completion, will take you approximately 10-15 minutes. From among survey respondents, I will ask 16-20 students to participate in an hour-long focus group. I will also ask 7-10 students to participate in two hour-long interviews. If you complete the survey and are asked to participate in a focus group or interview you can choose to say no.

ARE MY ANSWERS CONFIDENTIAL? Yes. Your answers will never be used in any way that would identify you. They will be combined with answers from other respondents to make a statistical report. If you participate in focus groups or interviews, you will be given an alias throughout the process so that your answers will not be connected to you.

HOW WILL THE DATA BE REPORTED? The research results will be used for my dissertation project and will provide important data on educational resilience of African-American students.
Please mark how you feel about each of the following statements.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your high school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree Nor Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I felt close to people at my school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I was happy to be at my school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I felt like I was a part of my school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The teachers at my school treated students fairly.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I felt safe in my school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, mark how TRUE you feel the next statements are about your HIGH SCHOOL and things you might have done there

At my high school, there was a teacher or some other adult . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. who really cared about me.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. who told me when I did a good job.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. who noticed when I wasn’t there.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. who always wanted me to do my best.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. who listened to me when I had something to say.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. who believed that I would be a success.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. who helped me with my schoolwork.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my high school . . .</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I did interesting activities.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I helped decide things like class activities or rules.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I did things that made a difference.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next statements are about what might have occurred outside your school or home, such as in your NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY, or with an ADULT other than your parents or guardian(s).

Outside of my home and school, there was an adult . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. who really cared about me.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. who told me when I did a good job.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. who noticed when I was upset about something.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. who believed that I would be a success.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. who always wanted me to do my best.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. who I trusted.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. who helped me with my schoolwork.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outside of my home and school, I did these things . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. I was part of clubs, sports teams, church/temple, or other group activities.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I was involved in music, art, literature, sports, or a hobby.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I helped other people.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How true do you feel these statements were about you when you were in high school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. I had goals and plans for the future.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I planned to graduate from high school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I planned to go to college or some other school after high school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I could do most things if I tried.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. There were many things that I did well.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**How true were these statements about your FRIENDS during high school?**

I had a friend my own age . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. who really cared about me.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. who talked with me about my problems.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. who helped me when I was having a hard time.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. who I could study/do homework with.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During high school, my friends . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35. got into a lot of trouble.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. tried to do what was right.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. did well in school.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How true are these statements about your HOME or the ADULTS WITH WHOM YOU LIVED?**

In my home, there was a parent or some other adult . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38. who expected me to follow the rules.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. who was interested in my school work.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. who believed that I would be a success.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. who talked with me about my problems.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. who always wanted me to do my best.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. who listened to me when I had something to say.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At home . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at All True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Pretty Much True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44. I did fun things or went to fun places with my parents or other adults.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. I did things that made a difference.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I helped make decisions with my family.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How important to you was what the following people thought you should do about your education?

Check one box in each row

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/Role</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Do Not Know/Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47. Your father or male guardian</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Your mother or female guardian</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Your friends</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. A relative whose advice you value</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. School counselor</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Your favorite teacher</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Coach</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Some other person: Who</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who did you talk to about continuing your education after high school?

Check all that apply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person/Role</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55. Parent(s) or guardian(s)</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Brother(s) or sister(s)</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Guidance counselor</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Teacher(s)</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Principal or assistant principal</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Religious leader</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Friend(s)</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Someone else: Who</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. No one</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What did the following people think was the most important thing for you to do right after high school?
Check all that apply in each row

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Go to College</th>
<th>Get a part-time job</th>
<th>Go to trade school</th>
<th>Begin military service</th>
<th>Get married</th>
<th>Do what I want</th>
<th>Don’t Care</th>
<th>I Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Demographic Information**

Name: ___________________________  Age: ________________

Email: ___________________________  Phone: ___________________________

High School: ___________________________

In what city was your high school located? ___________________________

My high school was:  [ ] public  [ ] charter  [ ] private

Are you African-American/Black?  [ ] yes  [ ] no

Gender:  [ ] male  [ ] female

Parent marital status:  [ ] married  [ ] not married

Parent Education Level: Please check highest level completed

**Mother**  **Father**

No high school  [ ]  [ ]
Some high school  [ ]  [ ]
High school graduate  [ ]  [ ]
Some college  [ ]  [ ]
College graduate  [ ]  [ ]
(BA/BS)  [ ]  [ ]
Graduate school  [ ]  [ ]
(Master's or higher)  [ ]  [ ]

Number of Household Dependents: ________
(Include yourself and any individuals financially supported by your parent(s)/guardian(s))

Annual Household Income:

Under 30,000  [ ]
30,001 – 40,000  [ ]
40,001 – 50,000  [ ]
50,001 – 60,000  [ ]
Over 60,000  [ ]

Can I contact you to participate in an hour-long focus group?  [ ] yes  [ ] no
*Participants will receive $15 for participation*

Can I contact you to participate in two hour-long interviews?  [ ] yes  [ ] no
*Participants will receive $30 for participation*
Appendix C
Focus Group Protocol

1. Please tell me where you’re from, your major, your year in school, and why you chose to attend UCLA.

2. If you were to name three things (people or experiences) that supported your academic success, propelled you to academic success, what would they be?
   - Possible Probes
     o What influence did your parents/family have on your academic success?
     o What influence did your friends have on your academic success?
     o Did you participate in college preparatory or mentoring programs that impacted your academic success?
     o Did you have teachers or counselors that supported you academically? How so?

3. If you were to name three things that were barriers to your academic success, what would they be?
   - Possible Probes
     o Did you have family members who did not support your academic efforts? Why not?
     o Did you have peers who did not support your academic efforts? What types of things would they say/do?
     o What did you think about the expectations that your teachers set for you and your peers? Did they expect you to achieve academically?
     o What type of relationship did you have with your college counselor or academic counselor(s) during high school?

4. Is there anything else you would like to share about what helped you or made it harder for you to get to college?
Appendix D
Interview Protocol

Interview #1 - Sociocultural Influences

Introduction
1. When and where were you born?
2. Describe your family. Probe here for family composition, parent and sibling education level, family SES, parent employment
3. What are you studying at UCLA?
4. What career options are you considering upon completion of your degree?

Sociocultural Influences
1. Outside of school, who or what most influenced how you did as a student and how you prepared for college?
   • Possible probes
     i. How involved were your parents in your life generally? In education specifically?
     ii. What were the most meaningful lessons that your parents taught you as a child
     iii. Describe your parents’ academic and/or professional expectations of you.
     iv. Describe the academic performance of your peers. To what extent did their goals influence (support or challenge) yours?
     v. Were you ever ridiculed for your academic achievement?
     vi. Did you have role models or mentors who provided guidance to you?
     vii. Did you participate in college preparatory programs? What impact did they have?
     viii. If family, peers, or community did not give you academic support, what other factors contributed to your success in school?
Interview #2 – Institutional Influences

Introduction
   1. What middle school did you attend? High school?
   2. Was your high school a public, private, or charter?
   3. How would you describe your middle and high school experiences?

Institutional Influences
   1. Which teachers, counselors, or courses most influenced how you did as a student? achievement?
      • Possible probes
         i. When did you begin taking college preparatory classes?
         ii. Did you find your teachers to be well trained? Well prepared? Supportive? Explain
         iii. What do you recall of your teachers’ expectations of you? How did they communicate their expectations to you?
         iv. What did your teachers say about college?
         v. Describe the relationship between your teachers and your parents.
         vi. Describe your experiences with college counselors and counselors at your school. How often did you meet with them? What did you discuss?
         vii. When did you begin taking honors/Advanced Placement courses? What motivated you to take those classes?
         viii. Please describe the extra-curricular activities you participated in. Did they impact your college preparation?
### Table 10: T-test results for each survey item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Variable</th>
<th>Group (n)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel close to people at school</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (15010)</td>
<td>3.90 (1.153)</td>
<td>-4.242</td>
<td>104.64</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(School Connected)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.42 (1.233)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy at my school</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (15049)</td>
<td>3.52 (1.036)</td>
<td>-5.723</td>
<td>105.13</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(School Connected)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.19 (1.264)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel part of my school</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (15036)</td>
<td>3.89 (1.123)</td>
<td>-5.916</td>
<td>104.79</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<td>(School Connected)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.24 (1.256)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers treat all students fairly</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14995)</td>
<td>3.57 (1.086)</td>
<td>-4.623</td>
<td>150.97</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
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<td>(School Connected)</td>
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<td>3.03 (1.179)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel safe in school</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (15011)</td>
<td>3.71 (1.171)</td>
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<td>3.27 (1.203)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a teacher who cares</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14726)</td>
<td>3.75 (0.587)</td>
<td>-15.989</td>
<td>107.35</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>(School Caring Relationship)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.82 (1.010)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers notice when I’m not there</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14710)</td>
<td>3.57 (0.650)</td>
<td>-10.578</td>
<td>106.63</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>(School Caring Relationship)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.89 (1.022)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers listened to me</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14700)</td>
<td>3.60 (0.718)</td>
<td>-9.263</td>
<td>105.79</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>(School Caring Relationship)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.94 (0.990)</td>
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<td>Teachers told me I did a good job</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14765)</td>
<td>3.70 (0.589)</td>
<td>-12.261</td>
<td>106.93</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>(School High Expectations)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.99 (0.965)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers wanted me to do my best</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14654)</td>
<td>3.71 (0.586)</td>
<td>-9.423</td>
<td>106.93</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
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<td>(School High Expectations)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.17 (0.956)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers believed I would be a success</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14669)</td>
<td>3.78 (0.557)</td>
<td>-14.397</td>
<td>108.02</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>(School High Expectations)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.98 (1.026)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Did interesting activities at school</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14716)</td>
<td>3.77 (0.83)</td>
<td>-13.505</td>
<td>107.60</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>(School Meaningful Participation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.23 (0.93)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Helped decide things at school</td>
<td>UCLA (103) Statewide (14806)</td>
<td>2.91 (1.139)</td>
<td>-8.973</td>
<td>103.21</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(School Meaningful Participation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.90 (1.051)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did things that made a difference</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (14776)</td>
<td>3.21 (0.972)</td>
<td>-9.377</td>
<td>105.11</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>(School Meaningful Participation)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.37 (1.096)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents interested in schoolwork</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (4128)</td>
<td>3.21 (0.972)</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>4230</td>
<td>0.382</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Home Caring Relationship)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.30 (1.001)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents talked about my problems</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (4123)</td>
<td>3.00 (1.088)</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>4225</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Home Caring Relationship)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.01 (1.170)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents listened when I had something to say</td>
<td>UCLA (104) Statewide (4134)</td>
<td>3.31 (0.966)</td>
<td>-1.945</td>
<td>4236</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.09 (1.106)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Parents expected me to follow rules (Home High Expectations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UCLA (104)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.75 (0.587)</td>
<td>3.59 (0.826)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-2.657</td>
<td>113.44</td>
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<td>p-value</td>
<td>0.009*</td>
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Parents believed I would be a success (Home High Expectations)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.76 (0.566)</td>
<td>3.46 (0.940)</td>
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<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-5.226</td>
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Parents want me to do my best (Home High Expectations)

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<tr>
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<th>UCLA (104)</th>
<th>Statewide (4132)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.73 (0.627)</td>
<td>3.56 (0.868)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-2.771</td>
<td>113.18</td>
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<td>p-value</td>
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Did fun things with my parents (Home Meaningful Participation)

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<tr>
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<th>Statewide (4113)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>2.82 (1.041)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.104)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>0.379</td>
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<td>p-value</td>
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</table>

Did things that made a difference (Home Meaningful Participation)

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.009)</td>
<td>2.75 (1.086)</td>
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<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-0.692</td>
<td>4193</td>
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Made decisions with my family (Home Meaningful Participation)

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<th>Statewide (4065)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.056)</td>
<td>2.76 (1.148)</td>
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<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-0.898</td>
<td>109.33</td>
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I had peers who cared about me (Peer Caring Relationship)

<table>
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<th>Statewide (4275)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.62 (0.628)</td>
<td>3.45 (0.907)</td>
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<td>-2.553</td>
<td>113.71</td>
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<td>p-value</td>
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Talked to peers about my problems (Peer Caring Relationship)

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>UCLA (104)</th>
<th>Statewide (4262)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.53 (0.775)</td>
<td>3.31 (1.009)</td>
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<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-2.873</td>
<td>111.69</td>
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<td>p-value</td>
<td>0.005*</td>
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Peers helped when I had a hard time (Peer Caring Relationship)

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<th>Statewide (4264)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.42 (0.878)</td>
<td>3.32 (1.002)</td>
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<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-1.015</td>
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<td>p-value</td>
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Peers tried to do what is right (Peer High Expectations)

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.13 (0.751)</td>
<td>3.05 (0.936)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>-1.130</td>
<td>111.0</td>
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Peers did well in school (Peer High Expectations)

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<th>Statewide (4229)</th>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.17 (0.794)</td>
<td>3.02 (0.906)</td>
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<td>Test statistic</td>
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Peers got in trouble a lot Reverse coded (Peer High Expectations)

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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<td>-0.847</td>
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Community adults care about me (Community Caring Relationship)

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<tr>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.38 (0.885)</td>
<td>3.41 (0.966)</td>
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<td>Test statistic</td>
<td>0.234</td>
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Adults noticed when I was upset (Community Caring Relationship)

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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>2.99 (1.119)</td>
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There were adults who I trusted (Community Caring Relationship)

<table>
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<td>3.23 (1.086)</td>
<td>3.19 (1.092)</td>
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Adults told me I did a good job (Community High Expectations)

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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>3.30 (0.964)</td>
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Adults believed I would be a success (Community High Expectations)

<table>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<td>Statement</td>
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<td>Statewide (14708)</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults wanted me to do my best</td>
<td>3.42 (0.910)</td>
<td>-0.268 14810</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Community High Expectations)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in extracurricular activities</td>
<td>3.39 (0.980)</td>
<td>-5.461 105.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Community Meaningful Participation)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Involved in music, sports, art</td>
<td>3.29 (1.030)</td>
<td>-1.853 104.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Community Meaningful Participation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped other people</td>
<td>3.41 (0.820)</td>
<td>-5.680 105.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have plans/goals for future</td>
<td>3.76 (0.599)</td>
<td>-3.380 113.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Goals/Aspirations)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Planned to graduate high school</td>
<td>3.87 (0.442)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Goals/Aspirations)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned to go to college</td>
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<td>-4.945 119</td>
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<tr>
<td>Could do things if I tried</td>
<td>3.72 (0.548)</td>
<td>-4.161 114.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Self-efficacy)</td>
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<td>There are many things I did well</td>
<td>3.69 (0.592)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Self-efficacy)</td>
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* Statistically significant at 0.01 level
** Statistically significant at 0.001 level
References


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